

Fractured Family

by Pink Mockingjay in Hufflepuff

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Summary: Hiccup finds a little orphan in a boat wreck and agrees to take care of her until a family can be found for her. The little girl quickly becomes attached to Hiccup, Astrid, and the dragons while she stays with them. They find that all you need to have a family is love. HTTYD2 spoilers! *Cover art by the awesome maldita-chan!* Now complete! Sequel posted! WRITTEN BEFORE RTTE RELEASE

1. Chapter 1

****WARNING!: HTTYD2 SPOILERS AHEAD!****

****DON'T SAY I DIDN'T WARN YOU!****

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><p>"The best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them." -Ernest Hemingway

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><p>"What is it, Toothless?" Hiccup asked as the Night Fury made a steep dive towards a beach. "What do you see?"<p>

Toothless grumbled and continued his descent. Hiccup knew the dragon well enough to know that if the dragon veered off course, it was for a good reason. This was a beach on one of their new islands. Astrid had dubbed it Dragon Nip Island, because there was so much of the stuff everywhere. That wasn't its name on the real map, of course. Hiccup happened to have two maps- one with the serious names and one with the silly ones.

Toothless landed smoothly on the beach, ignoring his favorite treat, and grumbled curiously towards

"A boat wreck." Hiccup said out loud.

Toothless approached the wreck, sniffing carefully.

"Is there anyone there, bud?" The beach was deserted and the boat looked like it had been there for a few days at least. The wreck didn't look so bad, but there was no sign of human life on the island. The wreck had either been very recent, contained no one, or the person on board the small boat hadn't survived. He hoped it wasn't the last option.

Hiccup stepped towards the boat and knelt down. There was a person Toothless was sniffing at. Definitely a girl on the younger side. He couldn't tell how old exactly, but she was likely quite a young child as she looked quite small. She was laying on her side, arms under her head. She looked very sweet, uncomfortable, but sweet.

"Is she-?"

At that second, the girl woke due to Toothless accidentally nudging her. She opened her eyes and when she saw the large reptile, she sat up and screamed a high pitched scream that made Hiccup put his hands to his ears and then she started crying. Toothless pulled his ears in close to his head and made a disgusted face.

"It's alright," Hiccup said when she stopped screaming as kindly as he could. She looked up him with wide eyes. "He's not going to hurt you. He's a friendly dragon." Hiccup scratched Toothless' head to demonstrate. Toothless purred.

The little girl still looked terrified.

"Do you understand me?" Hiccup asked her. Maybe the little girl spoke a different language.

"Yes," she said, sniffing. She had a baby lisp still, making her probably about three or so. She brought her knees to her chest. Her dress was torn under her left knee and there was a cut on her skin in the same spot.

"What's your name, little one?"

"Irena," she replied.

"That's a nice name." Hiccup replied, using the same tone of voice he used when he talked to little children in the village, especially the ones that were initially fearful of dragons. Astrid said it wasn't like most people's 'talking to kids' voice, it wasn't that much different than his own. He spoke to children like they were intelligent (they were) and he didn't use too much of the higher pitched 'baby voice'. He was simply calm and kind and that kept the children calm too. "You can come out of there, Irena. We won't hurt you."

Irena crawled out of the wreck and sat directly in front of him. Her blue eyes were full of curiosity and her braided hair was a golden blonde. She looked well. That was good. "What's your name?"

"You're going to laugh." he said with a smile.

She shook her head urgently. "I won't." She promised seriously.

"You can laugh, it's a pretty silly name." he assured. "Even I think it's kind of silly. Do you want to hear it?"

She nodded.

"My name is Hiccup."

Her face broke into a grin and she started giggling.

"See? I told you it was silly." Hiccup told her. Her giggle was rather cute and infectious and it made Hiccup chuckle. Hiccup patted Toothless' head. "This is Toothless."

She giggled more. "But dragons have teeth!"

"But he does only sometimes, see?"

Toothless gave the little girl a gummy smile and a nuzzle. Irena smiled.

"He likes you. You can pet him if you want."

Irena looked a bit afraid.

"Here," Hiccup put her hand on Toothless' nose. The dragon cooed softly at the touch of the little girl. "He's a nice dragon. Most dragons are nice, did you know that?"

She shook her head and rubbed Toothless' nose.

"Where I live, most everyone has a pet dragon. Where do you live?"

"Sola." she replied calmly. Toothless sneezed. "Ew," she giggled, wiping her hand on her dress.

Hiccup was stumped. He never heard of that place. "Where are your parents?"

"They went away." she said innocently.

"Where'd they go?"

She pointed up. "Heaven."

So this little sweetheart was an orphan.

"Why were you all alone on a boat?"

"I don't know. I can't remember." her thumb settled into her mouth.

"How old are you?"

She held up four fingers on her free hand.

Just a tiny little girl. Poor little thing.

"Do you want to come with me?"

She nodded without hesitation. Obviously she was very lonely.

"Alright," Hiccup stood up. "Come here." Irena stood up and held her arms up. Hiccup picked her up and put her on Toothless.

She looked at him as if he was crazy. Riding dragons? Was she dreaming?

"Well you didn't think we magically just ended up here did you?"

She giggled around her thumb.

"Alright, bud, take it easy." Hiccup said as they took off.

She was entranced and giggly the first few minutes but quite nearly fell asleep against Hiccup soon. When Toothless landed, Astrid was the first to notice.

"You were supposed to be back an hour ago! Where on earth were you?"

"Dragon Nip Island. It was dragon free, but I did find this little girl." Hiccup lifted Irena into his arms and got off Toothless.

"Oh no, was she alone?" Astrid said quietly, smiling at Irena, who was just barely awake. Irena smiled back shyly.

"Yeah, in a wrecked boat. She's four years old."

Irena cuddled against him. She was sleepy.

"Poor little thing. What's your name?" Astrid asked.

"Irena."

Half the village had taken notice of the odd sight of the young chief holding a little girl and had come to investigate.

"She looks alright, but I should probably make sure." the healer said, after hearing the story. She held her arms out for the little girl, but Irena wound her arms around Hiccup's neck.

"Where are we?" she asked sleepily.

"We're on Berk. This is where I live."

"Can I stay here with you?"

"Yeah,"

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><p>Irena had refused to go anywhere without Hiccup all day. She had cried when someone tried to take her away from him. Except for Astrid. She seemed to like Astrid too.<p>

"I think she should stay with you for a while. Until she's more

comfortable at least." the healer told Hiccup.

"With me?" Hiccup asked, bewildered.

"She's happy with you." the Healer replied nonchalantly.

"I can't take care of a little girl!"

"Sure you can. She already trusts you. That's the most important thing. And I'm sure Astrid will help you. You both seem rather fond of her."

Hiccup looked to where Astrid was sitting with the little girl. Astrid was trying to show Irena how to make a flower chain. Irena couldn't quite get it, but she was watching Astrid with rapt attention.

Astrid had been the only person that had been able to get the little girl to calm down, other than Hiccup of course. She had been assigned to asking her questions to see where she came from and what happened. For a girl with such a quick temper sometimes, Astrid was very good with children.

"She's four. She needs parents, not some dorky chief." Hiccup tried to reason.

"Not necessarily. She needs people to love her. I do believe you won't have a problem with that. And besides, seems like a good girl."

Hiccup sighed. "Alright,"

"Of course you'll have to start to teach her how to write and read."

"I-I think I can do that." Hiccup said nervously.

"Good. Have fun." the Healer walked away.

Hiccup smiled a bit and turned to Toothless. "Looks like we've got a new member of the family, bud."

Toothless looked to Irena.

"Yeah, she's going to stay with us."

Toothless smiled. He liked the little girl already.

"Alright, Irena. You're going to stay here with me." Hiccup said, putting the little girl on her feet. Someone had found her a new dress and her knee was all bandaged up. Those were the only things wrong with her. She was in fine shape for someone found on a deserted island.

Irena looked around. She was awake now. "Here?"

"Yep,"

She looked around. "Is this your house?"

"It is."

She didn't know what to do. Toothless nudged her from behind.

"He wants to play with you." Hiccup explained.

She smiled and patted Toothless' head, making the dragon purr. "He's cute."

Hiccup smiled.

Toothless rolled on his back and let his tongue loll out.

"He's like a puppy-dog." Irena commented happily. "I like puppy-dogs."

"I guess he is a little like a dog, huh?"

Irena sat next to the dragon and rubbed his stomach. "He's better than a puppy-dog."

Toothless looked upside at Hiccup, clearly saying that he liked this tiny creature.

Hiccup had to agree. Instead of an empty house with only a dragon's snores in it, there was giggles. It sounded less lonely, because it was less lonely. Irena was a cute, happy little girl. She seemed to be very smart and and sweet.

Hiccup felt someone hug his arm from behind. "Hey," he said, smiling at the arm-hugger.

"It looks like she gets along well with Toothless." Astrid murmured as she cuddled close to his side.

"Yeah. She says he's like a dog."

"I think it's sweet that you're letting her stay with you, Hiccup." Astrid smiled at him. "How long are you planning on letting her stay?"

"As long as she needs to." he replied honestly. He didn't think Irena would be a problem at all. He'd happily keep her around for however was necessary.

Toothless licked Irena, making her squeal with laughter.

Astrid kissed his cheek. "You're a wonderful person, Hiccup."

"I try,"

**A/N: Hi guys! Thanks for reading! This is my first HTTYD story! I hope you liked it so far. This story will probably get pretty long pretty quick. I already have an outline for the plot so I know where I'm headed. Updates might be every week to every two weeks depending on what's going on in my life. I hope you are all having a wonderful summer so far! **_

**Please review! They mean so much to me! **_

**See you next week!**

2. Chapter 2

**YOU GUYS ARE AMAZING! You're all so kind, so I decided to post chapter two today instead of next week! I hope you like it!**

**September 11, 2014- (Finally) Fixed a few minor mistakes with Terrible Terrors. I am leaving the Plasma Blast thing as a Plasma Blast because, quite frankly, I wouldn't know how else to word it.**

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><p>You can learn many things from children. How much patience you have, for instance." -Franklin P. Jones

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><p>"Okay, Irena. You're going to have to help me out here. I've never really taken care of a little girl before." Hiccup said a little awkwardly. Seriously, what did they do? It was some time after dinner, Astrid had gone home, and it was just him and Irena now.

Irena was sitting cross-legged on the floor, sucking her thumb. She looked happy enough, but she seemed to be a bit of a crier when she was scared, overwhelmed or upset and Hiccup did not want her to cry again (someone had shouted unexpectedly at dinner and Irena, frightened, had promptly burst into tears). Toothless had taken up sitting as close as possible to her, keeping her company and keeping her calm, so she (hopefully) wouldn't cry again.

Irena didn't know what to do, so she just sat there and stared up at her new caretaker.

Hiccup thought of everything he could before he spoke again. "Do you want to draw?"

She shook her head.

"I could show you around."

She shrugged. Indifference was so hard to work with.

Toothless casually flicked his tail a bit and knocked the Book of Dragons off Hiccup's desk, making Irena jump.

"Toothless," Hiccup scolded lightly, though he was smirking. He walked over to the book to pick it up. Toothless grumbled.

"That's a big book." Irena commented.

"I suppose it is." Hiccup said, picking it up.

"What's it about?"

"Well, it's about dragons. What they like to eat, how big they can

get, special skills..."

"Can I see it?"

Hiccup smiled. "Yeah," he sat down on the floor next to her.

"How many kinds of dragons are there?"

"Lots and this book has every one we know about." Hiccup opened the book to a random page. "This is a Terrible Terror. It's the second smallest type of dragon we know of. When they're grown ups, they only get about this big." He held his hands apart a bit so a Terror could fit in between them about perfectly.

Sharpshot flew in the window as if on cue.

"Hey buddy, it's been awhile." Hiccup said cheerfully. Toothless winced as the little dragon jumped on his head. Sharpshot was technically Hiccup's dragon, and, although Hiccup would feed him and play with him when he came around, the Terror never hung around for very long.

Sharpshot sniffed at Irena.

"Sharpshot, this is Irena. Irena, Sharpshot." Hiccup patted the little dragon's head. Sharpshot jumped onto Hiccup's shoulder.

"He's a Terrible Terror." Irena observed aloud.

"That's right, he is." Sharpshot stuck his tongue out and it hit Hiccup's ear, making him laugh.

"Are they all green?"

"No, they come in all different colors. Purple, red, yellow..."

"What kind of dragon is Toothless?" Irena asked. Toothless perked up at his name.

"He's a Night Fury." Hiccup said, flipping to that page. "He's the only one we've ever seen up close, actually. So everything in this book is about him."

"'Sh-shoots sp-spe-ci-al-special pl-as-ma blast in all di-rec-directions to find a-a way out of a ti-ght space if they are un-able to see.'"

Hiccup looked over at the little girl in shock. "You can read?"

Irena nodded. "My mama taught me how. She said I was quite good."

"Wow, that's impressive."

Irena shifted shyly, but smiled proudly. "Thank you."

Hiccup flipped to a new page and pointed at the drawing. "This is a Deadly Nadder. Astrid has one. Did Astrid show you her

dragon?"

Irena nodded. "Stormfly,"

Astrid found them like this when she came about ten minutes later, though Sharpshot was gone. Irena was switching her attention from Hiccup to the book, listening to every single word Hiccup was saying. Astrid had never seen a child with such a long attention span. First the flower chain with her, and now, the Book of Dragons with Hiccup.

Astrid thought the sight in front of her was absolutely precious, but it was getting pretty late for a four year old to be awake. Thankfully, she didn't have to speak to intentionally interrupt them, because Toothless came bounding over for a pet.

"Hey boy," Astrid said cheerfully, scratching Toothless on the head. He really was like a dog.

Hiccup and Irena looked up. Irena smiled at her and Astrid smiled back.

"Astrid? What are you doing here?" Hiccup asked.

"What, not happy to see your girlfriend?" Astrid asked with a teasing smirk.

"No, that's not it. I'm always happy to see you, milady. I just thought you went home."

"So did I," Astrid said, stepping around Toothless' tail. "But then I thought, _'Hey, Irena needs some pajamas and a bath and poor, clueless Hiccup's not even going to know where to begin. I think I need to help.'_ so here I am. You can thank me later."

Irena giggled.

"Oh, that's... yeah, thanks." Hiccup told Astrid. To be honest, he hadn't even thought that far ahead yet.

Astrid smiled knowingly at him. "Alright, Irena, bath time."

After Irena's bath, Astrid sat behind her by the fire, combing out her hair. Toothless sat, watching intensely, next to Hiccup.

"We need to get you some clothes of your own, Irena." Astrid told the little girl. Astrid had managed to snag one of her little cousin's nightgowns for Irena to use which was okay for now, but eventually Irena needed her own clothes.

Irena yawned in response.

Hiccup chuckled. "Looks like someone's sleepy."

Astrid yawned too.

"Make that two someones."

"Are you immune to yawns?" Astrid asked, amazed.

"Huh?"

"Yawns are contagious. You just saw both of us yawn and nothing? Really?"

"I-I-" Hiccup interrupted himself with a yawn. Huh, delayed reaction. "I thought that was a myth."

"It might be, but they seem awfully contagious to me." Astrid said. "One braid or two?"

"None." Hiccup said quickly.

Astrid rolled her eyes. "I wasn't talking to you, genius."

"Oh, right..." Hiccup trailed off, looking a bit embarrassed.

Irena giggled again.

"So one or two, little one?" Astrid questioned Irena.

"Two please,"

"Okay then," Astrid split Irena's hair into two equal parts and then started braiding them.

By the time Astrid had finished, Irena looked like she could sleep for three years straight.

"It's been a long day, Irena. Are you tired?" Hiccup asked.

The four year old only nodded.

"Time for bed then," Astrid softly, standing up and then picking Irena up.

Hiccup lead them to a previously empty room that he had done his best to make livable for the little girl on short notice. More could be done eventually, but it would suffice for right now.

Astrid put Irena in the bed and covered her in the blanket.

"Are you comfortable?" Hiccup asked.

Irena smiled sleepily as an answer.

"Good. If you need me at all, my room is to the left, okay?"

Irena nodded.

"Good night, Irena." Astrid said quietly before kissing the side of the little girl's head without much of a thought of it. Her mother had always done that to her when she was little and it always made her more comfortable. Hopefully it would make Irena feel the same way.

"Good night, Irena." Hiccup repeated, tucking a stray piece of hair that had come loose from its braid behind her ear.

Toothless walked in the room and curled up at the foot of the bed.

Hiccup scratched the Night Fury right behind his ears as a good night. Toothless cooed.

"Good night," Irena said sleepily before putting her thumb in her mouth.

Hiccup and Astrid shut the door almost all the way and then went to the living room.

Astrid wanted nothing more than to curl up against him and fall asleep, but her mother was expecting her home. Even though she was twenty years old, her mother was still her mother and her mother wanted her home. That meant she went home. "I have to go."

"Yeah, you should. It's kind of late." Hiccup was a little disappointed too.

Astrid smiled at him, delaying her leaving. "So she's interested in dragons, huh?"

"Very," Hiccup replied. "She wanted to know what kind of dragon Toothless was, so I opened to the Night Fury page, and she read the part about the plasma blasts guiding used to get you out of places out loud to me!"

"She's only four, right?"

Hiccup nodded.

"Wow," Astrid said in bewilderment.

"Seeing as I have stuff to do tomorrow, would you take her with you to the Academy?"

"I don't see why not." Astrid shrugged. She yawned then.

Hiccup smirked. "Go home, sleepyhead. I'll see you tomorrow."

Astrid smirked back and then kissed him. "See you tomorrow."

Astrid opened the door to leave and all Hiccup could think about was kissing her again, but it wasn't the time for that. And as nice as the Hoffersons were, he knew how protective Astrid's mother was, he didn't want her in trouble on his account.

"It looks like there's going to be a storm soon." Astrid warned him. He could never sleep through a thunderstorm.

"Okay. Thanks for helping today."

"You're welcome. I'll see you tomorrow." she said.

"Bye,"

She closed the door. He yawned then and decided to go to bed.

At least he could get some sleep before the storm hit.

* * *

><p>AN:Hey guys! WOW! Thank you so much for your positive response to this story! 8 reviews in about 24 hours is awesome to me! I hope it's more original than most and I'm really glad you like it! Thank you sooo much for all the follows, favorites and reviews! Next chapter will be mostly focusing on Astrid and Irena. **_

**Please review if you can! It means a lot! **

3. Chapter 3

**Hey, I'm back! I was going to wait until Monday, but then I realized how busy I'm going to be this weekend, so I thought I'd give you this chapter early so I won't forget Monday! This is a pretty long one (11 pages in my word processor). Enjoy!**

* * *

><p>"Hugs can do great amounts of good, especially for children."
-Princess Diana of Wales

* * *

><p>Hiccup jolted awake with a start. Why was he awake?<p>

A flash of lightning followed closely by a crash of thunder answered his question.

"Ugh," he grumbled, rolling over onto his stomach. Ever since he was little, it had been physically impossible for him to sleep during a thunderstorm. Rain? Sure. Snow? Yup. Hail? Bring it. Thunder and lightning? Forget it. He wasn't exactly a light sleeper, but he sure as heck wasn't a heavy sleeper either.

The rain sounded as if it was coming down sideways. Hiccup looked out the window, trying to see something, anything. But all he saw was another flash of lighting. Boom!

He was absolutely positive he wasn't going to sleep anymore. He had considered asking someone to knock him unconscious during a thunderstorm once when he was younger, but then decided against asking, figuring that was a little too far to go for his thunder induced insomnia. He stared in vain at the ceiling, trying to schedule the following day in his head.

Another crash of thunder brought with it a little shriek. Hiccup was confused for a moment, then remembered the small child down the hall.

Hiccup found Irena hiding under the blanket, shaking. Toothless was nuzzling her, trying to calm her down.

"Irena?" Hiccup asked gently.

Irena peeked out from the blanket.

"It's alright, just a little storm." Hiccup sat next to the shaking form of the little girl. Irena, probably on instinct, sat up and curled against his side, wrapping her arms around his middle.

Hiccup wasn't exactly sure what to do now. She was obviously in need of comforting. He had never been afraid of storms when he was little, but his father had always sat up with him every time one came.

Another bright flash made Irena cry out again and she tightened her grip on him. There were little girl tears and probably snot on him now. He didn't mind as much as he thought he would.

Hiccup wished Astrid was there instead of him, but instead of dwelling on the fact that he wasn't an expert on little girls, as he had never been one, he tried to do what Astrid would probably do. He moved his hand to her back, which to his surprise, actually seemed to calm her down some.

"Do you want to know something? I can't sleep during storms either. Neither can Toothless." Usually, Hiccup and Toothless would've been awake together, playing or whatever they could find to do.

Toothless gurgled in agreement at this before nuzzling Irena again. Irena kept her little face pressed into Hiccup's side still, but was noticeably less tense.

The next crash of thunder came exactly at the same time as the lightning. The storm was right over them.

"Can you stay with me?" Irena asked timidly, still shaking a little.

"Of course." He was going to stay until she feel asleep again. He tucked her back in and she kept a firm grip on his hand.

Hiccup woke up the next morning to Toothless cooing practically right in his ear. Irena had somehow managed to snuggle back against him in her sleep, she was still holding his hand.

She looked pretty adorable. The sunlight of the early morning caught her hair and made it look even more golden than it was anyway. A strand of her hair was hanging over her mouth and nose and every time she breathed out, it fluttered. She looked like a little angel, really. It was sweet. Hiccup smiled.

Toothless nudged him and gave him a smug look that clearly said _'just taking care of her until you find her a family, huh?_'.

"Shut it, you overgrown lizard." Hiccup whispered, not angry in the least.

Toothless just smiled cheekily in return. Or as cheeky as a dragon's smile could get.

* * *

><p>"There you two are!" Astrid exclaimed, though she was grinning. "I was afraid you got lost!"<p>

Irena laughed and tried to get up on the bench. She quite nearly fell and thankfully Hiccup was there to help her up.

"We both slept in a little longer then planned." Hiccup said, sitting

on the other side of Irena. "And then I wasn't sure how to brush her hair and I didn't want to hurt her."

"Explains the messy braids. I guess I'll have to become your personal hair stylist, Irena. Because Hiccup here is very incompetent with girls' hair. Trust me, I know." One time, while he was trying to be cute, Hiccup had somehow managed to yank her hair so hard, she actually yelped and punched him in the stomach in retaliation. She wasn't ever going to let that one go.

Hiccup rolled his eyes, muttering something about 'a year ago', and Irena grinned. She was really starting to like Astrid.

After breakfast and after Astrid had pulled Irena's hair into a ponytail with a white ribbon, Hiccup and Toothless and Astrid, Irena, and Stormfly went their separate ways.

"Where are we going again?" Irena asked for the third time that morning as she slipped her hand into Astrid's.

Astrid was a little surprised by the child's sudden display of trust. A few years ago, Fearless Astrid Hofferson never, ever thought she'd ever hold the hand of a child, but she was very wrong, it seemed.

"The Academy," she started to say again. Even if her patience could be worn out in seconds by the twins, Snotlout, or even occasionally Hiccup, she was always rather patient with little ones. She wasn't sure why exactly, it had always happened that way. "I help teach people how to ride and teach their dragons."

"Neat,"

Astrid glanced at the child next to her, all wide-eyed curiosity. She had a little limp-hobble going on due to her scraped up knee, though she had managed to keep a bit of an excited skip-bounce in her step.

Astrid lead the little girl into the Academy. Valka was already there, Eret too. Valka had agreed to help Astrid with the Academy after Hiccup had become chief, which wasn't so long ago, though sometimes it felt like ages and sometimes it felt like a day. Valka really felt like she could help there. She was doing a great job.

Eret, on the other hand, was there as a student.

"Good morning," Astrid said cheerfully to both.

"Good morning, dear." Valka said, smiling, reaching up to scratch Stormfly. Valka and Astrid got along well. Sometimes too well, as Hiccup put it. Valka was hoping somewhere in the back of her mind that Hiccup would just ask Astrid to marry him already, it was a long time coming, even she knew that. It was really rather obvious. If even Valka could see it, she had no idea what on earth that ridiculous son of hers was waiting for. She loved him to the moon and back, but sometimes he was so dense.

"Morning, Astrid." Eret added.

"Good Morning to you too, Irena." Valka smiled at the little girl.

Irena smiled shyly.

"You remember Valka, don't you?" Astrid asked, gently. "She's Hiccup's mom." They met briefly the day before at dinner.

Irena nodded at this.

"And this, Irena, is Eret." Astrid said as Eret walked over. "Eret, this is Irena."

"Well, it's a pleasure to meet you, Miss Irena." Eret said kindly.

Irena smiled at him. Everyone here was so nice. She liked it.

That's when the other students started trickling in. Three girls, two boys, all fourteen to sixteen years old. They each brought a dragon with them. There was a chubby, stout dragon with bumps on it that the youngest female student called Rex that made Irena smile. It was sweet, but already seemed rather disobedient to the four year old. It struck her as silly that Toothless and Stormfly were so obedient and friendly and Rex was rather lazy and was frustrating the poor teenager (Ingrid) already and class hadn't begun yet!

After Astrid explained that Irena would probably become a frequent sight (Ingrid and one of the boys smiled at her and Irena smiled back) she started saying things about flying the girl didn't understand. Irena sat in a corner, just watching as the older children tried to copy exactly what Astrid had shown them. Valka went around helping them correct their mistakes and such, as did Astrid.

A light purple Terrible Terror scurried over to her. Irena looked around. Everyone else had a dragon. Maybe this one didn't have an owner and just came to visit.

"Hello," Irena said quietly, holding her hand out towards the little dragon. It scurried away as quickly as it came. Irena sighed.

"Terrors are very flighty." Astrid said, sitting next to Irena. "Don't take it personally."

It was time to go home already. There were three classes a week. Monday and Friday's classes were full days and the optional Wednesday class was only a half day.

"Astrid?" Irena asked suddenly.

"Hm?"

Irena wasn't really sure how to ask the question without being too rude (if it was a rude question in the first place, she wasn't sure), but she was four and her filter wasn't working properly yet. Four year olds aren't necessarily known for their tact anyhow. "Does Hiccup like you?"

"Well, I certainly hope so." Astrid said to Irena, with a cheerful smile. "I'm his girlfriend."

Girlfriend. She tucked that word away in her head for future reference. She had never heard it before. "You like him then?"

Astrid laughed a little. "Very much. Is this idea new to you, Irena?"

"What?"

"Boyfriends and girlfriends."

Irena nodded. It was very new to her. They didn't have those where she came from. At least not to her knowledge. But she was four and the adults hardly bothered themselves talking to the little ones on her island (the fact that Hiccup and Astrid were talking to her like she was a big girl and not a little one confused her a bit, but she liked it). What did she know? "I thought grownups were either married or not married."

"Well, we definitely are not married."

"Do you want to be?" Irena turned her head a bit in question.

Astrid was stumped. How do explain the concept of dating to a girl who seemed to think you were either madly in love or not at all. "I-I guess. I mean, that's... hmm..." Explaining her relationship with Hiccup to a child while his mother was not too far away, playing with Cloudjumper, was not an ideal situation to be in.

Irena watched her new friend curiously. If she liked him so much, why was this such a hard question for her to answer?

"Having a bit of trouble, dear?" Valka asked, looking over at Astrid. She had a playful glint in her eyes.

Cloudjumper was looking over at the girls too, looking confused. What was all this talk of? Girlfriends? Was that the equivalent of a mate in human terms? Because if it was, he wasn't exactly sure why Valka's son and the blonde girl had no hatchlings yet. Humans were terribly confusing.

"A little," Astrid replied, looking a little flustered.

Valka joined the other two against the wall. Cloudjumper looked a bit upset that he had been abandoned.

"Are you pouting, Cloudjumper?" Valka asked her dragon, incredulously. Cloudjumper gurgled. "Go on, you. You can leave without me. Find something to do. I'll find you later. Go on." Cloudjumper left without bothering to nuzzle his rider goodbye. "Rude creature," Valka muttered.

Irena and Astrid giggled.

Stormfly looked anxious.

"You can follow him, girl." Astrid told the Nadder. Stormfly chirped

happily before nuzzling all three of them in a single move and leaving.

"So what were you talking about?" Valka asked.

Astrid leaned back against the wall, her face portraying her embarrassment, but she tried to look less embarrassed. "Irena isn't exactly sure what it means to be someone's girlfriend. I'm not exactly sure how to explain it."

"I see," Valka said in understanding. "Well, Irena, hmm. This is a bit more difficult than I thought..."

"I got it!" Astrid announced. "Girlfriends and boyfriends are together because they like each other a lot, more than friends like each other. They spend a lot of time together. Eventually, some boyfriends and girlfriends get married, but not always."

"Oh," Irena said. It made sense now. Kind of.

"Should we go get some lunch?" Astrid asked. Irena nodded and took her hand when they stood up.

When the three of them arrived in front of the great hall, they noticed that Toothless, Stormfly, and Cloudjumper were playing.

Cloudjumper, despite being immensely proud, had caved in to Toothless' insistence on playing once before and had genuinely enjoyed it. Stormfly and Toothless were far more energetic, but occasionally, Toothless would pounce on Cloudjumper, who would growl playfully and then go after Toothless.

"What a bunch of kittens." Valka commented, shaking her head slightly. "I never thought I'd see a day when Cloudjumper played like that."

Stormfly swatted Toothless with her tail, earning her a growl and a shove over. For an Alpha, Toothless usually didn't act like one so respected. A dragon would bow to him and then Toothless would tackle them to the ground to play, unless there was an actual problem he had to handle.

If Toothless was in front of the Great Hall, it was likely that Hiccup was inside.

He was talking to Fishlegs about something or another when they came over. They were both very deep in the conversation. Astrid waited for a lull before interrupting.

"Hey Fishlegs," Astrid said, plopping down next to Hiccup. She helped Irena up on her other side. Valka had gone to sit with her friends.

"Hello Astrid." Fishlegs replied. He looked towards Irena. "And you must be Irena."

Irena nodded.

"This is Fishlegs." Astrid said to Irena.

"Hi," Irena said shyly.

"How was class today?" Hiccup asked Astrid.

"Good. Oh! Fishlegs, I need you to come on Friday if you can. This poor girl has an extremely stubborn Gronkle and we have tried everything we could think of. She's so frustrated with him."

"Sure, I'll come." Fishlegs replied. "I'll bring Meatlug too, maybe she can help."

Irena lost the train of the conversation after that. She didn't understand what they were talking about. She was watching a couple of children about her age, sitting together, laughing.

"You can go sit with them if you want." Astrid said gently.

Irena looked up at her. "Really?"

Astrid nodded. "Go on. We'll probably be boring anyway."

Irena slipped off the bench and looked at Astrid one last time. Astrid nodded and Irena headed towards the children. She was nervous, but tried to look friendly.

"Hi,"

"Hi," another girl responded, looking slightly annoyed. She looked about six with wavy brown hair.

"Um, can a sit with you?" Irena asked. She shot a nervous glance towards where Hiccup and Astrid were sitting, and realized she was being watched.

A few of the children followed her quick glance and started whispering to each other. One of them, a boy, looked towards Irena.

"I don't think that'd be a good idea." the boy said.

Irena was a little hurt. "Why?"

"I'm sorry," the boy looked genuinely sorry, but that didn't explain his actions. "We just don't think it's a good idea."

Irena couldn't help it and just ran back to where she came from in tears.

"What happened?" Hiccup asked, confused, as Astrid plucked the teary little girl from the ground and put her in her lap.

Astrid murmured. "Oh sweetie,"

"They said no," Irena replied, tearfully, snuggling against Astrid.

Hiccup frowned and reached out to rub Irena's arm. If anyone knew about being left out, it was him. Astrid really tried not to give the kids a dirty look. She really did, it just didn't work.

It took a few minutes (and a hug or two) but Irena eventually calmed down. When she did, she got food put in front of her. Astrid didn't even move Irena out of her lap, she let her stay and just simply ate around the little girl's plate.

Irena suddenly noticed three other people at the table, two boys and a girl and Eret and every one of them was staring at Astrid, even the person from earlier, Fishlegs.

"What?" Astrid asked the other people, looking a little annoyed.

"I never thought I'd see you holding a kid." the dark haired boy said.

"Why?" Astrid glared.

"You don't exactly seem like the mothering type." Fishlegs said, looking a bit nervous and ready to duck or move away in an instant. Astrid scowled at him.

"Where'd she come from again?" the blonde boy asked.

"I found her alone." Hiccup said, sounding a little impatient, like he'd explained it a hundred times already.

"Irena, this is Snotlout, and the twins, Ruffnut and Tuffnut. You know Eret." Astrid introduced, pointing at each of them in turn.

Irena smiled shyly at them. "Hi,"

"You like dragons, kid?" Tuffnut asked.

Irena nodded enthusiastically

"Good," Ruffnut replied.

After lunch, Hiccup took Toothless and they went back to doing chief and alpha things. Astrid took Irena to her house. Astrid had managed to find some old things of hers for Irena.

"Why does Hiccup always have to do stuff?" Irena asked after she climbed onto Astrid's bed.

"He's chief. He's in charge of everything that goes on here and he helps anyone who needs it. That's why he's so busy. Hes very important."

"Oh," Irena put her thumb in her mouth. She was used to being yelled at for it (it soothed her still, even if she knew it was a bad habit), but she hadn't reprimanded for it here yet. Not even once.

"And Toothless follows him everywhere. They're attached at the hip." Astrid explained with a smile as she dropped a few things onto her bed. "Alright Irena, my mom is making you a dress, but I found a few things between me and my cousins we thought you might like."

Irena liked two out of the five dresses Astrid showed her and one

nightgown. Astrid put the others away again.

"What's that?" Irena asked, pointing at a toy on Astrid's shelf. Astrid was a grownup and grownups didn't have toys.

Astrid picked up the toy. "This?"

Irena nodded.

It was a doll Astrid's mother made her when she was a little girl. It had brown cloth hair and blue button eyes, a stitched-on smile, and a little purple dress with a little button in the back to keep it on (her mother had made other dresses for it). "This is my doll from when I was about your age."

"What's her name?"

"Lena," Astrid replied without even thinking about it. She smiled down at the little doll. She had been saving it in case she had a daughter one day. She looked back to Irena, who had only curiosity on her face and came up with an idea. "You know, she's been getting pretty lonely lately. Do you think you could take care of her for me?"

Irena's face lit up. "Really?"

"Really." Astrid replied, smiling. She handed the doll to Irena, who cradled it like a baby. "I'm sure she'd love to stay with you."

Irena looked incredulously at Astrid. "I can keep her?"

"Yes, you can keep her."

"Thank you!" Irena looked so happy that her face would probably hurt from smiling later. "Thank you!"

"You're very welcome." Astrid pulled the little box of other dresses off the shelf too. "These are her other clothes." Irena was amazed and very excited.

They spent the rest of the afternoon playing with Lena and her dresses, talking and giggling.

After dinner and Irena had gone home with Hiccup, Lena cuddled in her arms, Astrid's mother pulled her aside.

"I thought you were saving that little doll for your own little girl someday."

"Irena doesn't have anything to play with and Lena was just sitting on my shelf. I think Irena could use her more than my nonexistent daughter could."

Astrid's mother smiled sentimentally. "I haven't heard you call that doll Lena since you were ten."

Astrid smiled back. She hadn't. Ten was when she decided she was grown up. She was ten the first time she punched Snotlout in the face hard enough to actually, really hurt him. She was ten when Lena went

up on her shelf. She

"I think that little girl is good for you, Astrid. Both of you."

So did Astrid, even if she wouldn't come straight out and admit it.

* * *

><p>AN: Thanks for reading you guys! Your reviews are so sweet! I love to hear from you! The amount of reviews, follows, and favorites are so overwhelming! I have a bunch of stuff planned for this story, so I hope you'll stick with me! I will be bringing in things from the t.v. Show and I might be throwing in Frozen/Tangled (just a little bit) stuff as well (I don't do that 'Big Four' thing, but I like the idea of foreign people visiting Berk for some reason.

**_

**I have a question for you lovely people. I can't draw to save my life, so I thought it'd be nice to see what you guys think Irena looks like! I know a lot of people on here have talent in that area. If for some reason you decide to draw her (which you obviously don't have to), let me know through PM and hopefully we can figure out a way for me to see it! **

**Again, thanks for reading and I'll see you sometime after Tuesday of next week for sure!**

**Please Review! **

4. Chapter 4

Guess who updated early again? This girl! I couldn't get passed the middle of this chapter for three days (it was fighting with me) but I finally got it! I hope you like it!

**_My apologies maldita-chan. Now I feel like I lied to you!_ **

* * *

><p>"Time and experience have taught me a priceless lesson: Any child you take for your own becomes your own if you give of yourself to that child."- Dale Evans

* * *

><p>Irena had been on Berk for three weeks and she had easily and happily settled into the routine of things.<p>

She had done anything anyone asked of her the entire time she had been there, whether it be going with Astrid or being babysat by the twins (surprisingly, she came back as she went and no fires were set) or being watched by Toothless for a few moments when necessary. As long as she got to spend time with Hiccup at least for a few moments (she was hands down her favorite person), she was a very happy little girl. And considering she lived in Hiccup's house, even on a busy day she saw him and he usually at least read with her for a while at the very least.

Astrid, on the other hand, wasn't so happy with Hiccup's recent super busy schedule. She sort of missed him, as foolish as it sounded to herself. It's not like she didn't see him anymore, it's just that when she did see him it was only for a minutes here and there usually.

"Hey," Astrid said, walking into Hiccup's house. She never knocked, she never had knocked. It was just her thing. Some people had signature knocks, she had signature no knocking.

"Good morning, milady." Hiccup replied, looking a lot more like twenty years old than he had of late. He had that stupid grin on his face. He came over and kissed her cheek.

"What's up?" Astrid asked, trying to be casual, but it sounded suspicious. She was supposed to come over to watch Irena.

"What if instead of you watching Irena today, the three of us get away from here?" he asked, pulling her closer to him.

"You tricked me," she wasn't at all upset with this new plan, but she kept her arms crossed and an irritated look on her face.

"If you'd rather sit around here all day while I try to find something to do, that's fine too."

"Yeah right," Astrid smirked and then pulled him closer to kiss him.

"Ew, "

Hiccup and Astrid broke apart and turned around to see Irena looking a little disgusted and Toothless' expression matched.

"Give it a few years and it won't be so gross." Astrid said, picking her up.

"Yes it will!" Irena said, putting her head on Astrid's shoulder almost as if she was defeated. "Boys are weird."

"What's that supposed to mean, kid?" Hiccup asked, reaching over to tickle her side, making her giggle.

"So about leaving..." Astrid redirected, smiling.

"Oh right, well I asked Gobber if he could keep an eye on things for me-"

"Oh no, "

"My mom's keeping an eye on him keeping an eye on things. Hopefully no more baby girls named Magnus."

"What?" Irena asked, giggling.

"Gobber named a baby girl Magnus when we were younger." Astros replied.

"Why?"

"He thought she was too ugly not to be a Magnus." Hiccup explained.

"It was only a phase. Everyone calls her Maggie now. She's six now." Astrid continued.

"So she's pretty now?" Irena asked.

"Well she's prettier than anyone thought she'd be." Hiccup smirked.

Astrid really tried not to laugh. She really did.

"Are we ready to go?" Hiccup asked.

"I get to come too?" Irena asked.

"Nope, sorry, we're going to make you cut firewood all day long." Hiccup teased.

Irena giggled. "No,"

Astrid laughed. "Well, I'm ready."

"Can I get Kaida?"

"Sure," Astrid put Irena down and she ran off to get her stuffed dragon. Valka made it for her and she fell in love with it the moment she saw it.

When Irena came back, she and Astrid put the little dragon in Stormfly's saddle pouch so they wouldn't lose her and put Irena on Stormfly. Because

"Hiccup hasn't gotten the chance to show off in a long time. He's going to want to."

And then they were off.

"Lead the way, good sir." Astrid called to Hiccup.

"Will do, Milady."

The last time Irena was on a dragon, she was too tired to really pay attention, so she was completely in awe of her experience. She wasn't at all frightened.

Hiccup, although having not put on his flight suit, did show off a little.

"Ready bud?"

Toothless made an agreeable noise.

"Alright," Hiccup changed the Night Fury's tail setting. "Go on,"

They did a downward barrel roll before pulling up right before hitting the water.

"I still don't know how you can do that all the time and not throw up." Astrid laughed when they leveled out next to her.

"I guess I'm used to it by now." Hiccup replied, looking smug.

"Show off,"

Irena giggled.

Astrid made Stormfly go a little higher (slowly, as not to startle Irena). "I'd totally race you if I knew where we were going."

"Yeah and I'd win." Hiccup replied cheekily, coming up next to her again.

"Stop being such a little brat, Haddock."

He only smiled in response. "I think you're being the brat, Milady."

"Ooh, just you wait until we land, you little-"

Hiccup interrupted, grinning. "Watch your mouth madam, we've got little ears with us today."

Astrid glared at him. "You're lucky."

Irena was awestruck. She had never seen people say things like that to each other without them being angry with each other. Astrid and Hiccup seemed to not even be the slightest bit mad at one another, in fact, they seemed very happy. She hadn't seen Hiccup and Astrid argue, truly argue, since she came to stay with them. She didn't understand. Her parents always fought. Everyone on Berk seemed to handle their anger and differences 'like adults' as Valka put it once.

Toothless crooned and started a gentle glide down. Stormfly trilled in response and joined her friend in the glide. No urging from their riders, Toothless knew where to go and Stormfly would gladly follow him anywhere.

"Good girl," Astrid said to Stormfly. She looked back towards Hiccup. "Where are we going?"

"You'll see when we get there." Hiccup said. A moment later, they were below the cloud line and the island they were headed towards came into view.

"Itchy Armpit Island," Astrid noticed out loud.

Irena started giggling. "That's a silly name for a place."

"You can blame Toothless for that." Hiccup replied.

The Night Fury landed with an unnecessary, showy flourish.

"Prideful, showy..." Astrid let the rest of her sentence trail off as she helped Irena off Stormfly. She hopped off the Nadder and took the little purple stuffed dragon out of the pouch.

Stormfly nuzzled her happily and Astrid scratched her under the chin.

Irena had Kaida tucked in her arms and she studied the little forested area in front of them. Kaida meant 'little dragon' in another language. She didn't remember which, but Hiccup told her it did, so she believed him.

"Why exactly did you pick here?" Astrid asked Hiccup curiously as Toothless and Stormfly started a game.

He shrugged. "We haven't gotten the chance to explore it yet. I thought it'd be fun."

"What do you think, Irena? Want to explore with us?"

Irena nodded eagerly. She loved being included in things. The kids on the island still refused to play with her for a reason neither she or the grownups knew and on her old island, children never went anywhere with the adults. They were supposed to stay at home and play outside, the oldest watching the younger ones. Typically, the boys and girls stayed apart.

If her father could see her now, he probably wouldn't be very happy. Little girls were expected to learn how to clean and be mothers. They were never to go exploring. Not even when the little boys had mini expeditions through the woods were they allowed to join. A part of Irena was afraid that if she took one step further, she'd be punished like she would've been at home.

Astrid took her hand and the three of them started into the woods together. Stormfly and Toothless bounded along with them, sometimes trampling the brush beside them.

"At least we've got one well behaved dragon." Hiccup said, gently taking Kaida from Irena's hand and balancing it on her her head, making her laugh. Irena took the toy from her head and hugged it close to her again.

Toothless growled suddenly from behind them and Irena jumped.

"It's okay, he's just playing." Astrid promised after turning around to see Toothless laying flat on his belly on top of Stormfly's back, effectively pinning the Nadder to the ground. Stormfly whined to get him off , but he didn't budge.

"Alright bud, I think she's had enough." Hiccup told the Night Fury.

Toothless grudgingly let Stormfly get up.

A couple of minutes later, they stumbled across a grassy clearing. It was of a decent size, plenty of room for two dragons and a little girl to wear off more energy.

Toothless decided that chasing Irena around was simply the best idea in the world and Stormfly seemed to agree.

Astrid and Hiccup sat next to each other on the ground, watching.

Astrid put her head on his shoulder.

"It's been a long time since we've run off together." she said quietly, lacing her fingers with his. He started tracing circles on the back of her hand. "I miss this. I miss... being sixteen and stupid."

"With no one needing us and no one waiting for us and-"

"No real responsibilities, just a bunch of crazy kids with dragons who had nothing better to do." Astrid finished.

"Do you remember the first time we decided to disappear together?" he asked her.

Astrid's laugh was short, but genuine. "Yeah, that was pretty awful."

"Hey, I tried to do a good thing."

"You _tried_,"

He laughed.

The very first time they left the island alone, sixteen-year-old Hiccup specifically chose a day when the rest of their friends were busy. They left together on the pretense of exploring the new island Hiccup and Toothless found a few days before.

They did start out exploring and talking (and every chance Toothless got, he nudged Hiccup closer to Astrid with that ridiculous, sly smile of his), but then a rather decent sized blizzard started with too much wind and to be safe to fly back and they had to take shelter in a cave for hours (and hours, it seemed) until the blizzard calmed to a gentle snowfall and it was safe to go home.

The blizzard seemed to have been confined to the island and its direct surrounding area (they now called the island Blizzard Bog), because when they returned that there was only the light dusting of snow on Berk that there was when they left. Nobody believed that they were stuck on that island due to a snowstorm, not one single person.

>That was the day that Stoick started referring to Astrid as his future daughter-in-law.<p>

"You were so mad at me," Hiccup reminded her. "You threatened to feed me to Stormfly. And threw your axe literally within three inches of my head."

"Please don't do that again!" Hiccup cried, scooting away from where her axe hit the wall. "That was very much too close for comfort."

"If I wanted to be stuck on an island all day with you I would've asked!" Astrid complained loudly.

"How was I supposed to know it was going to snow so bad?" he exclaimed.

She sat dramatically against the cave wall as far away from him as

she could manage and crossed her arms (it was a smaller cave with two dragons in it, so it wasn't that far away). "You're just lucky I like you so much."

"Yeah, I did, didn't I?" she smirked.

"Don't look so pleased with yourself, Astrid. You gave me a heart attack."

It wasn't actually so bad. They did end up sitting next to each other and they just talked for all that time. When they got home, Astrid punched him in the arm.

("_That's_ for getting me stuck on an island in a blizzard.")_

And then, following her usual pattern of things, she kissed him.

"And

that's_ for everything else.")_

"Don't be such a baby."

While Hiccup and Astrid were talking, Irena and the dragons were together.

Toothless was laying on the ground, Stormfly was curled next to him, both were being extremely patient with Irena, who was talking to them and scratching them.

"This is Kaida. She's my dragon." Irena told the real dragons when she held up her toy.

Toothless sniffed at the object, confused. He was sure that it wasn't a real dragon. He lifted his front foot and pawed at the stuffed toy.

"Don't do that, Toothless. You could hurt her! She's just a baby." Irena told him, pulling Kaida close to her chest.

Toothless trilled in confusion. That certainly wasn't a baby dragon, why did the little girl seem to think it was?

"She's not a real baby dragon, Toothless." Irena whispered to the black dragon, as if she sensed his confusion. "She's just a toy. I'm only pretending."

Toothless cooed in understanding. He knew what pretending was.

After a bit longer of pretending, Toothless, and Irena grew bored. Stormfly had drifted off.

Toothless stood up and stretched. He grumbled at Irena. He wanted to play again. Irena didn't understand. Toothless bent down like he was going to pounce and flicked his tail, giving her a gummy smile.

Irena smiled in response and got up. Toothless started chasing her like before. They played chase for a few more minutes before Irena

tripped over a branch on the ground. Toothless let out an urgent cry and tried to catch her so she wouldn't fall, but it was too late.

Irena fell with a cry of pain and Toothless heard a little crack. Irena burst into tears.

"Irena, what happened?" Astrid exclaimed, rushing over. Irena tried to talk but she was crying too hard. Astrid helped Irena sit up against her.

Toothless pawed at the branch, grumbling urgently. She tripped. She tripped. Is she okay? I heard a snap.

Hiccup knelt next to them. "She tripped over the branch, bud?"

Toothless nodded.

Hiccup looked at Irena's arm. He touched it lightly, Irena cried out. "I think her arm's broken."

"Oh no," Astrid said softly, grabbing Kaida and putting her into Irena's good hand. "And she was running around there before too."

"Can you set a broken arm?" Hiccup asked Astrid.

Astrid shook her head. She knew how, but she also knew that setting a broken bone hurt a lot (she fell out of more trees than she could count when she was younger) and she couldn't bring herself to make Irena cry more than she already was.

"We'll have to take her home then." Hiccup said, standing up.

Realization hit Toothless like a blizzard hitting Berk. He made her fall. If he hadn't wanted to play Chase again, Irena's arm wouldn't be broken. She wouldn't be crying. She wouldn't be hurt. He let out a mournful cry and backed away slowly. Why did he always have to hurt the things Hiccup loved?

"Toothless, it's not your fault." Hiccup looked up. "You didn't do anything. She tripped. It's not your fault."

Toothless nuzzled against Hiccup sadly, whining.

"You didn't hurt her." Hiccup promised quietly, patting his head.

Toothless licked him a little, but turned his attention back to Irena, who was still wailing. He still felt a little guilty.

"Stormfly," Astrid called. The Nadder came over and Astrid lifted Irena onto the saddle and then climbed up behind her. She tucked Kaida into the pouch. Hiccup and Toothless took to the sky right after them.

"You'll be okay," Astrid promised Irena as they speeded towards Berk.

>Hiccup and Toothless were right next to them.<p>

They heard a Gronkle call and saw Fishlegs flying towards them about halfway home. "Hiccup!"

"What's the matter?" Hiccup asked him.

"Emergency meeting! You're needed right away!"

Hiccup looked towards Astrid and Irena helplessly.

"I've got her. She'll be okay. Go on." Astrid promised, tightening her hold on Irena.

Hiccup nodded and Toothless trilled sadly. "She'll be okay, bud."

They followed Fishlegs away and Astrid directed Stormfly to the Healer's hut.

Astrid took Irena inside and told the Healer what happened.

"Well put her down, I'll take care of it."

Irena screamed throughout the whole ordeal and Astrid held her other hand. Astrid was glad she didn't set her broken arm.

"There now, all finished." the Healer said gently to Irena. "It should take about a month to heal."

Irena's tears had reduced to sniffles. She looked exhausted. After being gone most of the day and crying so much, she was very worn out. She looked up at Astrid. "I'm tired."

"We should probably get you home then, huh?"

"You'd better hurry then, it's about to rain."

Astrid thanked the Healer and picked up Irena. It had just started to drizzle when they went outside. Her house was much closer than Hiccup's, so that's where Astrid decided to go. Stormfly put her wing over them like an umbrella.

Irena was rubbing her eyes by the time they got to Astrid's house. Stormfly went off to her stable.

"What a sleepy little face." Astrid's mother said when she opened the door. "Long day, little one?"

Irena nodded sleepily and so did Astrid as she carried the little girl inside.

"What happened to your arm?"

"I fell." Irena replied.

"Poor thing. We should get you to bed, Irena."

"Yeah, I was going to take her back home, but it looked like it was

about to-" Rain started hitting the roof. "Rain, and I didn't want to get caught in it."

"Well, go on and put her to bed."

Astrid tucked Irena into her bed with her arm propped up on a pillow. "I'll take you home if it stops raining okay?"

Home. Irena smiled a bit and nodded. She liked the sound of that.

Astrid kissed her head. "Try to get some sleep okay?"

Irena nodded again and Astrid went back down the stairs and sat in a chair.

"What happened today?" her mother asked her. "I didn't see you at all today and supposedly Hiccup left Gobber and his mom in charge."

"Hiccup took the day off and we went to Itchy Armpit Island with Irena. We explored some and then Irena played with the dragons."

"Is that how she fell?"

"Yeah," Astrid leaned back.

"Are you hungry?"

"Not really." Astrid sighed.

"Falling is a part of being a child Astrid. If anyone should know that, you should." her mother said gently, knowing exactly what her daughter was thinking about. "Don't beat yourself up about it, dear."

Astrid sighed again and her mother walked away. Half an hour later, there was a knock at the door. Astrid's mother opened it.

"Hi,"

"Hiccup, you're soaking wet! Come inside, we don't need you getting sick. You too, Toothless."

The dragon gratefully curled up in front of the fire. Stormfly did not like coming inside at all, Toothless on the other hand, wouldn't have it any other way.

Hiccup sat next to Astrid. "Toothless tried to help and it didn't work much."

Astrid laughed a little. "How was the meeting?"

"Everyone was freaking out because there'd been no word from Corona for quite some time and no trade or anything. We got word twenty minutes in that they 'apologize greatly' because the entire kingdom was preparing for the princess' wedding for the last few weeks and celebrating for the past few days. Their ship will be here next week, they swear."

"The lost princess got married?"

"Yes. Although, she's not so lost anymore." Hiccup smiled. "How's Irena?"

"Asleep."

"How'd she handle her arm being set?"

"As well as can be expected, I guess. It'll heal in a month."

"Well, at least she's okay."

Astrid nodded and stood up.

"Where are you going?"

"I was about to go check on her before you showed up, you might as well come with me."

Hiccup followed her up the stairs. Irena was sound asleep. Even if it wasn't raining, there was no way either of them would take her home, they wouldn't want to risk waking her up.

"Where am I going to sleep now?" Astrid threw her hands up in quiet half-frustration when they were back on the main floor. She sat on the floor next to Toothless.

Hiccup sat next to her and pulled her against him. "I don't know."

Irena woke up the next morning to a dull, but very bearable pain in her right arm. She didn't know where she was at first, but she recognized it as Astrid's room. Oh right.

She got up carefully, as to not hurt her arm much, and went down the stairs. She smiled when she saw Astrid and Hiccup all curled together against Toothless.

Maybe this was going to be her home now. Maybe they weren't going to find her a new mom and dad. Maybe they were going to be her new mom and dad. She'd like that very much.

* * *

><p>AN: I hope you liked this! Like I said before the chapter started, this chapter was fighting me big time! I hope the part about Irena breaking her arm wasn't too weak. **_

_**Thank you guys all sooo much for your favorites, follows, and reviews! They're all so kind and I really appreciate them all!
**_

5. Chapter 5

"What is best is not always easy."- _one of my teachers and I'm sure someone else, but I couldn't find who said it._

* * *

><p>"Great news, Hiccup!"<p>

Hiccup looked up from the paper in front of him. His absent-minded doodle had turned into a sketch of Toothless curled in front of a fireplace with Kaida sitting on the top of his head. His surprise had caused him to jerk the pencil across sketch-Toothless' body, meaning he'd have to color the picture black, something he hadn't really been planning on. "Yes Ivan?"

"We think we've found a family fer the lil' girl you've bin mindin'!"

Found a family? Hiccup had nearly forgotten he had promised to take care of her until they could find her a new home. She had been a very happy addition to his life. She was always in a good mood, always eager to learn something new, and always eager to hug someone (which he discovered a few evenings previous before he put her to bed).

"That's-That is good news. Who is this family, may I ask?"

"My cousin from Nart. He's got six boys but all his wife wan' is a lil' girl. I told 'em there was one here wi'out a fam'ly and now she's excited. They're comin'--"

"In three days." Hiccup finished quietly. He had been notified about the visiting Nartians the day before, but not why they were coming. He stood suddenly, gathering his papers. "I'm sorry, Ivan. I have to go. I-I promised Toothless we'd go flying this afternoon."

Ivan nodded in understanding and Hiccup squeezed past him and went right to his house. Astrid, Irena, and his mom were at the Academy. It was a Monday.

Hiccup sat down and put his head on his arms that were resting on the table.

Toothless had followed him all the way home and nudged him now, causing the rider to lift his head.

"What am I going to tell her, bud?" Hiccup asked his dragon quietly, his voice unexpectedly breaking. "How am I going to explain this?"

* * *

><p>It was the best thing to do for her, really it was. She'd have a stable family, she wouldn't need to be bounced around or be babysat by dragons. She'd have siblings. She'd have somewhere to call home.<p>

Irena was with the twins (again) while Hiccup explained the situation to Astrid and his mother, the two other people Irena was most attached to.

Astrid didn't realize how close she had gotten to Irena in the last few weeks until this came up. Hiccup didn't look any happier than she felt. It was the best thing for Irena, she knew it, but that wasn't going to make it any easier. "Three days, you said?"

Hiccup nodded slowly. Three days. _Three_ days.

"What are you going to tell her?" Valka asked her son. She loved the little girl, but not nearly as much as he did, even if he didn't know it quite yet.

Hiccup shrugged. "I'm going to tell her like I'd tell anyone else and hope she understands."

* * *

><p>"Irena, I need to talk to you." Hiccup said to the little girl. Irena looked up from her doll. Her arm was almost completely healed now, next week she would be fine. She smiled and came over by him. "I have some good news."<p>

"What?" Irena asked curiously.

"We found a family for you." Hiccup tried to sound happy.

Irena had a sinking suspicion he wasn't talking about him. "Who is it?"

"They're from Nart and they have six boys, but they really want a little girl. They're very excited to meet you."

"Oh," Irena tried to keep the disappointment out of her voice. She really liked it here, she didn't want to leave.

"They'll be here in three days."

"I have to leave with them when they go home?" she asked.

He smiled a little, albeit somewhat sadly. Maybe this straight-forward approach was too insensitive to use on a little girl. "Yeah, you do. Their home will be your home."

Why couldn't here be her home? She didn't want to cry. She was a big girl! Big girls weren't supposed to cry. She was going to be somebody else's little girl, but she didn't want to be. She wanted to be his little girl. "Okay,"

He tried to look happy for her, but he wasn't sure it was working. "I'm sure they're very nice."

Irena nodded and then did something she'd never done. She lied. "I'm tired."

"Already?"

She nodded and he put her to bed, Toothless curled up at the side of the bed. As soon as Hiccup left, she started to cry. Toothless whimpered and nuzzled her. He didn't like to see her cry.

"I don't want to go." she told the Night Fury through her tears. Toothless cooed sadly and curled next to her on the bed. Hiccup was too tall for him to have ever done this, but Irena was little and she needed comforting. The bed creaked a little, but did nothing more.

* * *

><p>"Well, this must be Irena!"<p>

Irena frowned a little when she was hugged by this new woman. She squeezed her a little too tight.

"What a sweet little thing you are! Just a little baby." the woman continued speaking in her baby talk, going on about how small and cute Irena was. It was making Irena a little frustrated. The only time she'd ever been talked to like that here was when she was tired or her arm was hurt. Hiccup and Astrid and everyone talked to her like a big girl.

"I suppose I should introduce myself." Irena smiled a bit. Yes, this woman needed a name. "I'll be your new mommy." Irena decided it'd be rude to ask for her name if she wasn't going to give it. "And this'll be your new daddy."

Irena smiled a bit at the strong, burly man her 'mommy' pointed to. The man smiled back.

"And these are your new brothers." the woman went on to list the names of the six boys. Irena was sure she'd never remember all their names. She did decide to remember the two closest to her age: six year old Asger and three year old Erland. She'd also remember the oldest: fourteen year old Leif.

After much too much squishing and hugging, Irena was finally allowed to escape with the boys. The three middle boys went to play and the two little one's and Leif played with Irena.

"So your our new sister?" Leif asked. Irena nodded. Leif was a bit taller than most boys his age with light brown curly hair and friendly honey colored eyes. He was on the skinnier side, but he did look like tough. And the scars and scrapes on his hands meant he was very good in hand to hand combat or very bad.

"How come your Mama and Daddy don't want you anymore?" Asger asked. Leif glared at his brother. "Were you naughty?"

"My mommy and daddy are in heaven." Irena replied quietly. They had been dead for quite sometime now, but it still hurt to talk about it.

>"If he's not your daddy, who is he?" Asger questioned, looking at Hiccup. Asger was sort of a stocky boy with messy reddish hair and curious gray eyes.<p>

"That's Hiccup. He found me alone and took me home. He's really nice."

"How come_ he_ doesn't want you anymore? _Were_ you naughty?"

Irena didn't think she'd been a naughty girl. She wasn't the type. "He said he'd take care of me until I had a new family."

"And we're your new family." Leif smiled. He seemed nice enough.

"What happen?" Erland pointed at Irena's arm, which was still

bandaged. Erland still had baby fat, but he was pretty cute. He had brown eyes and dirty blonde hair and a mischievous little smile that made Irena think he'd have fun with the twins.

"What happen_ed_," Leif corrected gently.

"I fell and broke it when I was playing. It's almost healed." Irena explained.

"Did it hurt?" Erland asked her.

Irena nodded.

"What do you like to play?" Leif asked his new 'sister'.

"I like to play Chase with Toothless and Stormfly, but Astrid said not until my arm is better." So, never. Because the day her arm was going to be better was the day she was leaving.

"Who's Astrid?" Asger asked.

"Hiccup's girlfriend." Irena smiled proudly at the proper use of her expanded vocabulary. "She's nice too."

"We can play Guess the Picture." Leif suggested suddenly.

"How do you play that?" Irena asked.

"Well, everyone needs to get a stick and then someone starts drawing a picture and whoever guesses it right first gets a point and whoever has the most points at the end wins." Irena supposed if you were the biggest of six, you'd have to be very good with kids and very patient like Leif was.

"It's fun." Erland promised, taking Irena's good hand.

"Okay."

They gathered their sticks and started to play. Toothless saw this and came trotting over, a sapling clamped in his mouth. He started 'drawing', spinning all around the kids, even the middle three (Olaf, Benedikt, and Bjorn) who were some distance away.

"Wow." Asger said quietly.

When Toothless had finished, he dropped the tree he plucked from the ground and hummed proudly at his work.

"What'd he draw?" Leif asked, turning on the spot, trying to make something out. His foot touched one of Toothless' lines and the Night Fury growled.

"Don't step on his drawing. He doesn't like that." Irena giggled.

"How do we get out?" Asger asked.

Irena smiled and took Erland's hand. She and Hiccup had been trapped in one of Toothless' masterpieces before and he had shown her what to do. "You have to not step on anything." Irena demonstrated and Erland

followed. "Like dancing."

Leif and Asger looked at each other and shrugged before weaving and stepping around and over the lines Toothless made. The other boys joined in. They were laughing before long and Asger even twirled like a dancer a few times. They made quite a group.

"Well, at least they get along well." The boys' father, Erik, said from where he was watching. "She seems like a sweet child."

"She really is." Hiccup said, smiling a bit.

"Did she have any siblings?" Hildegard, the boys' mother asked Hiccup.

"She's never mentioned any." Hiccup replied. "I doubt it. She's been vey open with us about her life before we found her. Well, at least what she remembers. She hit her head in the boat wreck."

Leif took Irena's good hand and spun her in a circle, making her giggle.

"Leif's wanted a sister since he knew what one was. He wanted Erland to be a girl just as much as his mother did." Erik chuckled. "He's going to treat her like a princess."

* * *

><p>Irena was leaving in four days with her new family. She was very happy with them, it seemed. At least with Erland, Asger, and Leif.<p>

"So you like them?" Hiccup asked.

Irena nodded, fiddling with the end of one of her braids. "They're fun."

"Well that's good." Hiccup smiled. "I'm glad you like them."

Irena smiled.

Hiccup tucked the blanket around her. "I think you'll have fun with six brothers."

"Me too." Irena had Kaida tucked in her arms and Lena on the pillow next to her.

"Good night, Irena."

"Good night." Irena replied, smiling sleepily, before rolling over.

"Night bud," Hiccup said to the Night Fury who was curled up at the foot of Irena's bed

Hiccup frowned a bit as he left the room. Irena always hugged him.

"What's wrong?" his mother asked from the table, looking up from a sheet of paper.

"She didn't hug me." he tried to sound casual, but he sounded like he felt- a little hurt.

"Maybe she just forgot." Valka assured him.

"Am I making the right choice? Sending her away?" Hiccup asked her. Was this really good for her? He was pretty sure it was.

"I think you'll do whatever you is best for her." she replied, standing up.

"Thanks for the help, Mom." Hiccup said sarcastically. If he knew mothers were made for vague answers and teasing...

"Good night, dear." Valka said, patting his cheek.

"Night,"

* * *

><p>Astrid was folding Irena's clothes and Irena was watching.<p>

"At least you like your brothers." Astrid told her.

Irena nodded. Lena was in her lap. She was leaving tomorrow morning. She wasn't sure if she wanted to miss Astrid and Hiccup when she left. They were making her leave. Maybe they didn't like her as much as she thought they did.

"You know we're only doing this because we think it's best for you, right? We can't keep carting you off to other people when we're busy. You deserve a good family with a mom and a dad and siblings. We can't give you that."

Irena looked up at Astrid.

Astrid smiled a bit at the little girl and put down the dress she was folding. "I know I'm going to miss you like crazy though."

"Really?"

"Of course. Why wouldn't I?"

Irena scooted over toward Astrid.

"Everyone at the Academy keeps saying how much they're going to miss you." Ingrid and Ben always played with her at lunch now.

Irena looked down at the doll in her hands and then handed it to Astrid. "You should have her back."

Astrid looked down at Lena. "I gave her to you."

"You wanted to give her to your little girl one day if you had one. I heard you say so to Hiccup's mommy the other day. I'm not your little girl. I was just borrowing."

Astrid smiled sadly and hugged the little girl. "You're such a sweetheart."

Irena returned the hug.

* * *

><p>"How's your arm, little one?" Valka asked. Hiccup had just taken her to get her arm checked one last time.<p>

"All better." It felt a little funny though. And it looked funny too. All pale and skinny.

"Good," Valka knelt on the ground. "Can I have a hug, Irena?" Erik and Hidegard were coming in about half an hour to get her.

Irena ran into her arms to hug her. After missing Hiccup growing up, she still got to see the world through a child's eyes with Irena around. "We'll miss you."

Irena smiled. "I'll miss you too."

"Do you have everything ready to go?" Hiccup asked.

Irena nodded and Hiccup went to get the bag Astrid had packed for Irena the night before.

Something had changed in Hiccup the last couple of days. He seemed more melancholy, lonely.

Astrid came over to say goodbye too.

"You'll be a good girl, won't you?" Astrid said quietly when Irena hugged her.

"Yes."

Astrid kissed the top of Irena's head. "Have fun with your new brothers, okay?"

Irena nodded. Toothless crooned sadly from the corner and the four year old went over to hug him.

"You're a good dragon. I'll miss you." Irena whispered, wrapping her arms around his neck. She kissed the side of his head. Toothless nuzzled her, whimpering.

There was a knock on the door and Irena looked up.

"That's them." Hiccup said softly. Irena came over by him and he opened the door.

"Ready to go, dear?" Hildegard asked.

Irena nodded and Erik took her bag. Irena looked up at Hiccup.

He smiled at her. "I'll miss you, little one."

She smiled back and looked away. She felt tears coming and she didn't want to cry. She didn't want to miss him.

"Bye Irena," Astrid said. Irena didn't move.

Leif took Irena's hand.

And then Irena was gone.

Hiccup closed the door and sat in a chair, his head in his hands. Astrid squeezed next to him. She had expected him to hug her at least. He had seemed oddly emotionless all morning.

"I couldn't do it. I couldn't hug her." he whispered sadly. "I was afraid I wouldn't be able to let her go."

Toothless came over and put his head on Hiccup's lap, crooning softly. He was going to miss Irena, too. Stormfly was making sad noises outside too.

Astrid took his hand. "I know what you mean. She'll be-she'll be happy. She'll be okay." She sounded more like she was trying to convince herself.

Valka put her hand on his shoulder comfortingly.

"She was never going to stay here. I knew that. Why do I feel so terrible?"

"Because she grew on all of us." Astrid replied quietly. It felt strangely empty in the house now.

Toothless crooned again, more urgently.

"What is it, bud?" Hiccup asked the dragon. Toothless went into Irena's room and came back with a stuffed purple dragon toy clamped lightly in his mouth. He dropped it in Hiccup's lap.

"She left it..." Valka said.

"She gave me Lena back last night..." Astrid added softly.

Toothless gave Hiccup a look that clearly said 'you know what you have to do'.

Hiccup stood up suddenly. "I have to give this back to her."

* * *

><p>AN: **_**Cliff Hanger, hanging from a cliff! And that's why he's called Cliff Hanger! "Between The Lions" anyone? :P I hope you guys are liking the story so far and I'll update soon! I promise!**_**

So I was watching Spongebob the other day and Plankton called Karen "milady" and I wasn't totally paying attention cuz I was writing and I said out loud "I don't remember turning on HTTYD..." Thankfully, I was home alone. Haha :)I'm also very excited because I'm going to a TFIOS book club later. ****

_Please review! They mean a lot and I ****__**love**__**** hearing from you! See you next week!**_**

6. Chapter 6

**No quote today... couldn't find one. CLIFF HANGER OVER!**

* * *

><p>"Hiccup-" Astrid began, a little confused.<p>

"I have to do this. I'll be back." Hiccup said, throwing the door open and running towards the docks, Toothless following. Astrid and Valka exchanged a look before going after both of them.

In the five or so years since he lost his leg and got his prosthetic, Hiccup had become rather gifted in stepping over and around the small pebbles and holes that would have never bothered him before without even really paying attention. Thankfully, that went for when he was running too.

"Irena!"

The little girl turned around. Leif let go of her hand. He had caught up just in time. They were just boarding the boat.

"Irena, you forgot someone." Hiccup said, kneeling in front of her. He put Kaida in her hands.

She tried to give the toy back. "But-"

Hiccup interrupted her. "She's your dragon. She'll miss you. How are we going to tell her you left?"

Irena hugged her toy close to her chest.

Hiccup put his hand on her shoulder. "And besides, you have to remember us somehow, don't you?"

She could never forget them. She didn't want to. She couldn't. And she especially didn't want to forget Hiccup. She started to cry a little and threw her arms around him suddenly.

"I love you." she whispered through her tears, hugging him as tight as a four year old with a recently healed broken arm could.

Hiccup hugged her back. "I love you too." He finally realized it. He didn't know why it took him so long to admit it to himself. He didn't know why he didn't tell her sooner. And now it was probably too late.

A few moments later, Hiccup let her go.

"Please don't make me go." Irena begged tearfully, clutching Kaida like a lifeline. "Please. I want to stay with you."

Toothless cooed softly. Come on, Hiccup.

Hiccup frowned a little and tucked a piece of hair behind her ear before standing up.

Erik, Hildegard, and all six boys were watching them. Hiccup looked more towards Erik and Hildegard more than anything.

"I think I've made a terrible mistake." he began. "I didn't know how much of a difference Irena made. As soon as she left, my house felt lonely. We all love her here. Especially me. I-I just don't think I can let her go with you. I'm really sorry."

Irena smiled. Hiccup wanted her to stay! But would 'mommy' and 'daddy' let her? Toothless cooed happily.

Hildegard and Erik exchanged a look and then Erik spoke.

"We understand. Children have a way of making you love them. Why do you think we have so many?"

"We'll be sorry to see her go, but I think she needs to stay here. It's clear you two already have a bond." Hildegard added.

Hiccup smiled. "Thank you."

"Can we have a hug before we go, Irena?" Hildegard asked. Irena ran forward and hugged all eight of them in turn. Leif looked saddest and he hugged her tightest of all, but he smiled when he saw her smile at Hiccup. She'd be happier on Berk.

"Next time we come to visit, we'll make sure we see you, Irena." Hildegard promised, handing the little girl back her bag.

"Okay," Irena replied happily, taking her bag back before running back to Hiccup, who picked her up.

The Nartians left on their boat and Hiccup turned to Irena. "How would you like to stay with me?"

"Forever?" Irena asked him.

Hiccup smiled. "Yes, forever. You can be my little girl. Would you like that?"

Irena smiled widely and kissed his nose before wrapping her arms around his neck. Toothless excitedly cooed, nuzzling Hiccup happily. Irena got to stay!

"I'll take that as a yes." Hiccup told her quietly.

"If you're my daddy now, does that mean Astrid can be my mommy?" she asked into his shoulder.

Hiccup laughed. "We'll see."

Astrid came over just then. "What happened? What did I miss?"

"I couldn't let her go. I love her. I see that now."

"So you're saying that she's staying?" Astrid asked with a smile.

"Absolutely. I'm adopting her."

"I knew you'd see it in time, son." Valka said to Hiccup, who was smiling. "You're doing a good thing."

Irena felt like the luckiest girl in the whole world. She got to stay exactly where she wanted to stay.

* * *

><p>"So she's staying?" Snotlout asked at dinner.<p>

"Yes." Hiccup replied

"That means she's your cousin," Fishlegs told Snotlout.

"Who, the little one?"

Fishlegs shook his head slowly. He was so done.

"Even I followed that." Tuffnut commented.

"Me too." Ruffnut added.

"Where is she now?" Fishlegs asked.

"She went over there with Astrid." Hiccup nodded towards the teenagers in Dragon Training. They were all jointly confused about something and had asked Astrid to run it by them again.

"Speaking of Astrid..." Fishlegs said, after making sure Astrid was still out of earshot.

"Don't even bring it up, okay?" Hiccup said quickly, confusing Snotlout and the twins considerably. Bring_ what_ up? "You're the second person asking today. And the other happens to be a small blonde who's about three feet tall."

"Did something happen between you two?" Fishlegs asked gently.

Hiccup shook his head. "No, no. Nothing happened. A lot changed though, so my original plan won't work."

"Plan for what?" Snotlout asked.

"Quit conversating around us." Ruffnut added.

"Yeah, we're not stupid." Tuffnut interjected.

Fishlegs and Hiccup exchanged a look and then Hiccup sighed.

"You three have to swear that you won't repeat anything. Ever. To anyone."

Snotlout rolled his eyes. "Alright, I swear."

The twins swore as well.

Hiccup was about to speak when Irena came running over.

"Astrid needs your help." Irena informed him.

"With what?"

"Dragon stuff. She's stuck. She thinks you'll be able to help."

Hiccup got up. "Alright." he turned back to his friends. "You can tell them if you want, Fishlegs. Before the twins explode."

Once the little girl was out of hearing range, Fishlegs spoke.

"Hiccup has been trying to figure out how to ask Astrid to marry him. He had a plan, but due to recent occurrences, the opportunity never arose."

"Just ask her, right? I mean it can't be that hard to propose to someone." Snotlout said.

"Who's getting proposed to?" Eret asked, sitting across from the twins.

"Astrid," all four dragon riders said at once.

"You are all proposing to Astrid? I don't think Hiccup would appreciate that." Eret smirked.

"Hiccup wouldn't appreciate what?" asked Hiccup, sliding back in to his seat.

"Everyone proposing to your girl."

Hiccup raised an eyebrow. "What did I miss?"

"Nothing really." Fishlegs promised. "Anyway, did you figure whatever it was out?"

"Yes. Well, technically Irena did. We were all trying to work through the question and Irena absorbed all the information and just says the answer. She's a really smart kid."

"After your own heart then." Eret said to Hiccup, smiling.

"Absolutely." Hiccup replied.

"I'd bet three yaks and a Rumblehorn that you are having a bit of a problem in the lady department, my friend." Eret continued.

"Maybe a little one. I can't figure out what to do! I don't know how to ask her! I had a whole plan-"

"Practically a schedule." Fishlegs interrupted.

"Practically a schedule and then we found you guys and then I found my mother, who was supposed to be dead mind you, and then here was the whole battle thing and then my dad..." Hiccup sighed. "And everything got screwed up and now I don't know what to do. Everything's all discombobulated." Hiccup was exasperated.

Ruffnut blinked at the young chief. "...bless you...?"

"Thanks Ruff," Hiccup sighed. Oh, these people. No help at all.

"I really hate to say it, Hiccup, but when you were with Astrid, Snotlout said something smart."

"Smart?" Hiccup asked. Since when did that happen?

Snotlout looked scandalized. "Don't sound so surprised, cuz. I happen to be quite the intellectual."

Hiccup rolled his eyes. "Okay, what did you say, oh great intellectual?"

"Just ask her. She's been with you for how long now? Four years?"

"Four and a half." Hiccup corrected.

"So obviously she sees something in you, Odin knows what, but she really likes you for some reason. I say just go for it."

Hiccup blinked a few time. "That...that may have been the best advice you've ever given me."

"I told you." Snotlout looked smug.

"I agree with Snotlout." Fishlegs sounded as if he was being forced to say it.

"Same." Tuffnut agreed. "She seems to like it when you're direct with her anyway."

"She does. She told me so." Ruffnut added.

Eret clapped Hiccup on the shoulder. "I don't know you two as well as these guys do, but I must say I agree, Hiccup. Just ask her. What could go wrong?"

Hiccup chuckled. "Well, I could end up as Nadder food, I could loose another leg, she could maim me... the list goes on."

"Then have Irena nearby. I hardly think Astrid would commit murder if Irena's around." Fishlegs told Hiccup. "It'll work out."

"Thanks guys." Hiccup said genuinely.

* * *

><p>"Okay, so the Skrill." Hiccup said, sitting next to Irena. He had started going through the entire Book of Dragons with her. She could name more dragons at a glance at this point than the other children her age could.<p>

Irena took her thumb out of her mouth long enough to say, "Strike class."

"That's right." Hiccup smiled at her. "And strike class dragons tend to be...?"

"Unpredictable." Irena said, snuggling into his side.

Hiccup smiled. "Exactly. The Skrill happens to be one of the most mysterious dragons. It's pretty scary."

Irena completely removed her thumb from her mouth. "Have you seen one up close?"

"Much too close."

Irena scanned the page quickly. "But they don't breathe fire or have any venom. Why are they so scary?"

"Why don't you read it and tell me?" Hiccup prompted, tilting the book towards the little girl.

After reading silently for a few minutes, Irena looked up to Hiccup. "They channel lightning into their mouths?"

"Yes. And the blasts are very destructive, all though, they have a shot limit of-"

"Four." Irena interrupted.

"Yes. And they're really tough too. We found one frozen in a glacier when Astrid and I were around Ingrid and Ben's age. We made the mistake of melting the ice and it was alive!"

"Oh no! Where is it now?"

"Frozen in a glacier." Irena gave him a funny look. "It's kind of a long story. But before we refroze it, Toothless and I got stuck in a thunderstorm with it. And it's not too smart to be going against a dragon that harnesses lightning in a thunderstorm when you have a metal shield, a metal leg, and your dragon has a mostly metal tail."

Toothless looked up from his nap at the obvious description of him. He came over and examined the page. Skrill. He snorted unhappily. He hated that thing. He curled back up next to Hiccup.

"How come?"

"Lightning is attracted to metal." Hiccup explained.

"Oh," Irena's tone of voice clearly conveyed that she thought that going after a Skrill was a very stupid idea after hearing that fact.

Hiccup laughed. "That was only one time, I promise. I'll never do that again."

Irena giggled and snuggled more against him.

It surprised Hiccup how comfortable Irena seemed with him. Right away, she had trusted him. He wasn't sure why and he was sure even she didn't know. Maybe one day when she was older, she'd be able to explain it when she had the words. She was four now, it was fine she couldn't explain it. Feelings were weird.

Hiccup put the book aside. "You know I didn't really want you to go. I just thought it'd be best if you had a happy family somewhere, because we're all mixed-up here."

"I don't care that you're mixed-up. You have the best family." Irena said as she hugged him.

He was glad she thought that. "What were your parents like, Irena?" Hiccup asked her. She hadn't spoken much about them. Just that the three of them lived in a rather small house where Irena had a regular visit from a striped gray cat who she named Lille. Her mother had taught her how to read and write early because the earlier she got that out of the way, the earlier she Irena could learn how to sew and cook and clean.

"My mama was nice I guess. She didn't like my daddy much and he didn't like me."

"Do you know why?"

"He wanted a boy. I'm not a boy. And he and Mama didn't like each other because they didn't want to get married. They had to." Irena paused. "Are you gonna make me learn how to sew?"

Hiccup laughed. "Not if you don't want to."

"Good." Irena crinkled her nose.

"You can do whatever you want here."

"Like ride dragons?"

"If that's what you want to do."

"How old do you have to be to get a dragon?"

"Usually about twelve, but some kids get Terrible Terrors early."

"Like Sharpshot?"

"Well yes, but I got Sharpshot when I was fifteen."

"How old are you now?"

Hiccup was surprised this question never came up before. "How old do you think I am?"

Irena looked at him thoughtfully for about thirty seconds before saying "Old?"

"Old?" Hiccup laughed, plucking her from her seat and putting her in his lap and tickling her a little, making her giggle. "I'm twenty."

Irena's eyes widened. "That's not very old..."

"No, but I am quite a lot older than you."

"How old is Astrid?"

"Twenty. But she's a few weeks younger than me."

"When's your birthday?" Irena asked him. Big people had birthdays too, right?

"In a few months." Hiccup replied. "And yours?" What a shame it would've been to have missed her birthday.

"Wintertime,"

So Irena was about four and a half.

Irena put her thumb back in her mouth and snuggled against Hiccup's chest sleepily. He was a bit surprised, but he put his arm around her anyway.

She said nothing for a few moments and neither did he. He was about to ask her a question, but when he looked down, he noticed that she had fallen asleep. He picked her up carefully and carried her to her room. He tucked her in.

"Good night, Irena." he said quietly, putting Kaida in her arms. "I love you."

Toothless was whimpering by the door when Hiccup came back into the main room.

"What's wrong, bud?" Hiccup asked, approaching the door. He opened the door slowly and saw Astrid five feet away from the door.

"Hey," she greeted, stepping around him into the house.

He shut the door behind her and turned to face her with a mock-serious expression on his face. "And what, young lady, happens to be of such a pressing matter that you think it's acceptable to enter the house of the chief without knocking at this late hour?"

She decided to play along. "Oh, great one, please accept my sincerest apologies. I had not realized it was so late."

Hiccup smirked at her. "You'll have to do better than that."

Astrid took a step closer to him and grabbed the front of his shirt, yanking him closer so she could kiss him.

Toothless audibly moaned from the corner. Now that the little human fledgling they found that Hiccup called Irena was for sure staying with them, he had no reason to watch her so carefully anymore. She wasn't going anywhere. And he was thrilled he could get back to his rock bed in Hiccup's room. The dragon hoped his rider and Astrid would finally do what humans did when they found their mate- get married. The kissing was a bit much at this point.

"Is that better?" Astrid asked Hiccup.

"Yes," Hiccup replied, smiling cheekily at her. He ran his hand down her arm until he caught her own hand. "What brings you here? Irena's

in bed if that's the reason."

"Well, kind of, but if she's asleep, you can just give Lena back to her in the morning." Astrid put the do in Hiccup's hands. "I have to go."

"So you show up, kiss me, give me a doll, and now you're leaving? What's that all about?"

"My mom said I was to 'come right back' because 'Hiccup needs to bond with that little girl'." Astrid shook her head.

"Can't you stay just a little longer? I-I have something for you." Hiccup took a deep breath. Why was he following Snotlout's advice again?

"I guess so. Make it quick though. Or else I won't hear the end of it from my mother."

"Okay, I'll try." Pressure, lovely. Now he was going to be a rambling fool. "Um... Gods, how am I supposed to say this? A-Astr-"

He was interrupted by Mrs. Hofferson's irritated voice coming closer to his house. "Astrid? Astrid. What did I tell you?"

Astrid dropped Hiccup's hand and looked at him apologetically. "Sorry babe, I have to go. I'll see it tomorrow?"

"Yeah, maybe." Hiccup ran his hand through his hair.

She kissed his cheek quickly. "Wish me luck. Bye."

"Good luck, Milady. See you tomorrow."

She opened the door and closed it as quietly as she could behind her.

Hiccup went to his room before he could hear her mother speak again. He sat on his bed and sighed.

Toothless nuzzled Hiccup comfortingly. Even though Toothless didn't really know what happened, he would always be there for comforting Hiccup. Always.

"Thanks buddy." Hiccup said, giving Toothless a good scratch behind his ears, making the Night Fury purr. "You know, one of these days, I'm gonna do it. I will ask her."

Toothless crooned in agreement before going over to his rock bed, igniting it and curling up on top of the warm rock. He had missed this. He couldn't light the floor in Irena's room.

"Good night, Toothless." Hiccup said, before putting out the candle.

Toothless grumbled in reply.

Daughter? Check. Wife? Pending.

* * *

><p>AN: Hey all! Thanks for reading! I hope you liked it! This chapter was not planned to go this way at all, but I like it! The next few chapters will have more of Irena with Toothless and Valka and also there might be more Hiccup and Astrid fluff, but I'm not really good at romance, so please bear with me! Will Hiccup ever get the chance to propose? What do you guys think? **_

**I got over 500 notes combined on my two HTTYD text posts on Tumblr and I'm excited because that's a lot! If you happened to read someone's dream opening of HTTYD3, that was mine! **

**My friend has come to the conclusion that I could be Hiccup and Astrid's daughter, which is kind of cool.**

**As usual, your guys' reviews mean a lot to me! I love hearing from you! Please review if you have the time! They make my day!**

7. Chapter 7

This chapter took a far different turn than I expected. Now rated T. Complete description below.

* * *

><p>*Warning: Non-descriptive mentions of child abuse.*_

* * *

><p>"Childhood should be carefree, playing in the sun; not living a nightmare in the darkness of the soul." -David Pelzer, A Child Called "It"

* * *

><p>"What kind of dragon is Cloudjumper again?" Irena asked Valka.<p>

"He's a Stormcutter." Valka replied. He had offered to watch Irena for Hiccup while he and Astrid went somewhere alone. Valka had an inkling suspicion why he had asked Astrid to go somewhere with him, but she couldn't be sure.

"Do you think Hiccup will let me have a Terrible Terror?" Irena asked her grandmother. She liked the sound of that, she never had one before.

"I don't think he'd have a problem with it, but you'll have to ask him."

"Okay,"

"What color would you want, if you can have one?"

"Blue." she said immediately, smiling."That's my favorite color."

It just so happened that a group of Terrors hatched a few days before and there was a sweet, bouncy little blue female in the bunch and

Valka figured she was the perfect temperament for Irena.

"Is Astrid ever going to be my mommy?" Irena asked innocently after a few minutes.

The day was beautiful. It was warm, but not too warm. The sky was a gorgeous blue with big, fluffy clouds dotting the sky. The birds were tweeting, the Terrors were singing. It was lovely.

"I hope so, dear." Valka loved Astrid like the daughter she never had. She was wonderful for Hiccup, helping him pick himself back up, keeping him in line, making him smile.

"Astrid's better than my real mommy. She's nicer. And more fun."

Valka almost laughed. She hadn't been around long, but she had been around long enough to see Astrid's temper. It wasn't a very pretty thing to see. However, Hiccup seemed to have a positive effect on her mood and so did Irena.

"_You're_ better than my mommy." Irena told her, looking as honest as a child could look.

"Oh, Irena, you can't mean that."

"I do!" Irena proclaimed.

Valka was touched. Children were amazing judges of character. The love of a child was the purest kind and if a child loved her, she must be doing something right.

Irena bounced Kaida on the ground as if the dragon was walking. "My mommy would be mad at me if she saw me by a dragon. She always said they weren't for little girls. She thought they were dangerous."

"A lot of people thought they were dangerous, Irena. Not just your mother. And they can be if you don't know what you're doing."

"I know, but she'd still be mad."

"Did you have many dragons were you lived?"

"No. Just a few. Nobody ever tried to hurt any, we just stayed away. My daddy and some other grownups tried to train some, but they couldn't do it."

"Oh dear." Valka smiled a bit.

"Daddy always came home mad because he couldn't make the dragons do what he wanted." Irena's voice lowered considerably. "He was really mean when he was mad and he already didn't like me."

"Did he hurt you?" Valka feared she already knew the answer.

Irena's eyes dropped to the ground.

"Irena," Valka's voice was gentle but stern. "Did your father hurt you?"

Irena pointed to a faint scar on her arm and then one on her cheek in response, looking ashamed of herself. "I wasn't a good girl. I couldn't sew because I always hurt my fingers. I was supposed to know how to sew. I was supposed to be a good girl because I wasn't a boy. And I wasn't and Mama couldn't make me good, so she got hurt too."

"It's not your fault, darling." Valka assured, pulling the little girl close to her. "It's not your fault."

"I'm bad." Irena protested miserably, leaning into Valka's side.

"You're a very sweet girl, Irena. You're a good girl. You don't have to be perfect here, you're perfect just the way you are to us."

"I made my mommy and daddy go away because I was bad."

"No, honey. No you didn't. Don't blame yourself for something out of your control." Valka kissed the top of her head, soothing her some. She felt sorry for the abandoned little angel before, but now she felt worse. Abused and disliked by her own father and she blamed the deaths of her parents on herself. "Whatever happened to your mom and dad?" Irena's memory was coming back in pieces and hopefully she'd remember something now.

"They left and never came home." she said simply. Was this all or was there more she didn't remember?

"How'd you get on the boat?"

"I-I think there was a fire. I don't know..."

Poor dear. Valka put Irena in her lap. "No one will ever hurt you hear, Irena, but if someone tries to, you let one of us know."

Irena nodded seriously and leaned back against Valka. "I'm tired."

"Already?" Valka was surprised. It was only about three in the afternoon. She pressed the back of her hand to the little girl's head (she hadn't forgotten that in her twenty years as a crazy, feral, vigilante dragon lady. She was still a mother and she used it on the dragons actually discovered that they had fevers when they were ill sometimes too). It felt a bit warmer than usual. Perhaps she was catching a cold from the sudden warm-up of the weather. "You feel a little warm. I think a nap would be good for you. Maybe you'll be able to sleep the fever off."

After putting the little girl in her nightgown and tucking her in, she stayed inside in case Irena needed anything. Cloudjumper shoved his head in the window, demanding attention.

Valka laughed and scratched his neck. "What a big baby you are."

About half an hour later, Hiccup and Astrid returned, looking happy but no more happy than usual. A quick glance and a very discreet shake of the head was all mother and son needed to communicate that he still hadn't proposed. He was waiting 'for the perfect moment' and

apparently that hadn't happened yet.

At least her news about Irena wouldn't kill the mood. There was really no mood to kill.

"Irena told me something interesting today." Valka said quietly.

"Wait, where is she?" Hiccup asked.

"Taking a nap. She has a very slight fever. She'll be fine."

"Continue." Astrid urged, sitting on the armrest of a chair.

"It turns out that the scars on her arm and cheek are from her father." They had assumed they came from playing, just being a kid.

Astrid's eyes widened and Hiccup's eyes narrowed.

"He hit her?" Astrid almost hissed. "How has this never come up?"

"She was probably afraid to say anything." Valka replied.

"How could someone... she's a child!" Astrid exclaimed.

"There are some disturbing people in this world, Astrid." Valka replied. The very idea of Irena cowering in front of and being hurt by someone who was supposed to love her made her skin crawl.

Hiccup sat with a huffy sound. That wasn't right. Was she scarred in other places? The fact that he seemed to love her more in a few months of knowing her than her own father had in years was something he never expected. Sure, she had said she didn't care much for the man, but he never expected this.

"She also told me that her parents left and then never came home. I'm not sure if that's all, but that's all she knows. Also, she believes there was a fire and that's how she ended up on the boat. She thinks it's her fault her parents are dead because she couldn't do what they wanted her to."

"Poor baby," Astrid whispered in a tone Valka had never heard her use before.

Valka figured they had some talking to do and announced that she had something new she wanted to try with Cloudjumper. They were her parental figures now, they needed to discuss if anything was going to change.

"Thanks for watching her today, Mom." Hiccup said to his mother.

"Anytime, dear." Valka cupped his cheek in her hand for a second and patted Astrid's arm before leaving.

* * *

><p>It was after dinner, but Hiccup and Astrid stayed home with Irena, who was still sleeping. Her fever was still going, but it didn't feel too high.<p>

Astrid had sat next to the deeply dozing little girl, surveying up and down both her arms and legs, her face, her stomach and back finding more scars. There were a few more. One particularly nasty one was on her back.

"What kind of person hurts an innocent little girl?" Astrid asked quietly, mostly to her self, untangling a section of Irena's hair with her fingers. Toothless warbled quietly in agreement from his place next to her.

"One with a mind twisted beyond repair." Hiccup's response from behind her was equally as quiet.

His face held a look of utter disgust at the idea of hurting a child, but it softened when he looked at Irena. He sat on the other side of the bed and she let out a tiny, contented sound when he put his hand on her back. She rolled over, still sleeping, and shifted towards him slightly. Without thinking, he picked her up and held her against him, her head on his shoulder, as if this action could save her from all the injuries and memories she already had.

She made a sleepy noise and cuddled against him, her thumb made its way to her mouth.

Astrid heard a yell from a mother to her children outside declaring it was eight o'clock. Astrid reached over and pushed a few strands of hair out of Irena's face. Her cheeks were flushed slightly and her forehead was still warm. "Hopefully she doesn't get any worse. If it does, let me know, okay?"

He nodded, adjusting his hold on Irena.

"Someday, my mom will realize that I'm twenty and don't need a curfew."

Hiccup laughed a little. She kissed the top of Irena's head and then her boyfriend on the lips before giving Toothless a good scratch and leaving.

"Hopefully one of these days, Irena, Astrid's going to be your mom." he whispered quietly to the little girl before putting her back under the covers. Lena and Kaida were next to her. She whimpered slightly at the lack of warmth. "Even if it takes until you're twelve, I'll ask her eventually, I promise. Until then, she's going to protect you anyway, just like I will. We love you, Irena. Don't ever forget that." he kissed her forehead, something he had never done before.

Toothless curled up soundlessly at the foot of her bed, deciding that he'd stay with the girl if she was sick.

"Good boy, Toothless." Hiccup praised, patting the dragon on the nose. "If she wakes up and needs anything, wake me up. Okay?"

Toothless nodded and rested his head on his front legs.

"Good night, Irena." Hiccup blew out the candle and closed the door almost all the way behind him.

The first few years of Irena's little life may not have been spent in a place where she was loved and happy, but the rest of her life would be if Hiccup had any say in the matter.

* * *

><p>AN: *To the guest who commented about Snotlout's relationship to Irena, he's Hiccup's cousin, so any child of Hiccup's would be Snotlout's (second) cousin.***_

_**Hey guys! Sorry this chapter is so short and took so long! You know how some people do a rough draft and then write the bugs out of it? Well, I had to write **__tarantulas__** out of this chapter! It was giving me such a hard time and geez, I'm so sorry. This chapter took a 180 degree turn, it was supposed to be a happy chapter about Irena and Valka getting closer, but, well, this happened so I guess I'll roll with it.**_

_**Just to let you know, now that Irena's background is becoming more apparent, this topic will **__**not**__** go away, therefore I am bumping the rating up to a T because I'm not sure how exactly how this is going to go. I've never done this before.**_

**I do understand if some of you stop reading. I know topics like this can be touchy and I won't be offended or anything.**

**This fandom is seriously the best. You guys are so awesome! I love your reading your reviews! They make my day!**

_**Thanks for reading! If anyone ever needs/wants to talk, my PM box is **__always__** open.**_

_Thanks **__maldita-chan__** for the awesome new cover image!_

8. Chapter 8

**I'm back!**

* * *

><p>"The best things in life are unexpected - because there were no expectations." -Eli Khamarov_

* * *

><p>Irena's fever was absolutely gone by the next morning. She woke up in a happy mood.<p>

"Good morning, Toothless." she said cheerfully. Toothless grumbled some and stretched before opening his bright green eyes and blinking at her. She giggled. "You're a sleepy dragon."

Toothless cooed and nuzzled the girl. She scratched him.

"Is it early?" she asked the Night Fury. She went to bed early last

night. It must be earlier in the morning, right?

Toothless cocked his head. _What do you consider 'early', little one?_

"Is Hiccup awake?" she tried again.

The dragon shook his head. _Probably not, he was up thinking about you for a long time. I know he was._ All Irena got out of this was no.

Irena got dressed then sat back on the bed. Astrid still fixed her hair every morning because she couldn't do it yet and Hiccup didn't want to hurt her. Toothless put his head in her lap. She smiled as she patted him. "I hope I can get a dragon. Do you think Hiccup will let me?"

There was a happy trill in response. He knew she'd be getting a Terror and he didn't like them much, but if it made her happy, so be it.

She kissed Toothless' snout and he cooed. If he'd known that human fledgelings harbored so much affection, he would've gone looking for a stray years ago. Toothless nuzzled her, making her giggle.

He licked her arm, right where one of her scars was. _This won't hurt you anymore. None if them will. I will protect you. We will protect you._

Irena seemed to understand his trill and smiled at him.

There was a familiar scent to the girl. It had been very strong when he found her, but it was hardly noticeable now. He couldn't place the scent exactly, but he didn't like it.

"I love you, Toothless." her voice was gentle. She did love him.

Toothless smiled at her. _And I love you, small one._

Hiccup had come in just after Irena kissed Toothless, but neither of them noticed him.

"Anyone hungry?" he asked them.

Irena turned around. "I am!"

Fish? Fish! Fish! Toothless wagged his tail and bounced all around. Irena giggled.

"Fish for Toothless, I guess." Toothless bounced more. "What else do you eat?"

Toothless gave him a look.

Irena hopped off the bed and took Hiccup's hand, the previous day's events pushed out of her mind.

After breakfast and after Astrid fixed Irena's hair, Valka came over to them.

"I need to ask you two a question." Valka said.

"Why don't you go on ahead with Ingrid and Ben, Irena?" Astrid said to Irena. "I'll catch up."

Irena smiled and ran off to find her friends. Ben and Ingrid loved playing with Irena, even though they had a good ten years on her. The teens were very close friends.

"Irena wants a Terror." Valka said.

"She does?" Hiccup asked.

"Desperately." Valka replied. "There was a group that hatched the other day at the Academy and there's a little blue female that I think would be perfect for her."

Astrid smiled. "Yeah, she's a sweet little thing. On the active side, but--"

Hiccup interrupted. "As if I'm not used to excitable girls. I have three in my life already."

Astrid and Valka smiled.

"So is that a yes on the Terror?" asked Astrid.

"I don't see why not." he shrugged. Terrors were good starter dragons and he hadn't a doubt about Irena's abilities to care for one. Even though they were kind of flighty, if you got to one early enough, they'd stick around.

"Why don't we surprise her with it?" Astrid suggested, looking to both her boyfriend and his mother. "After class?"

Hiccup smiled.

Valka nodded.

"Sounds like a plan." Hiccup said. "Hey, I have to get going."

"Okay. Have fun." Astrid smiled.

"Be careful," his mother warned. It was more of a 'don't rush just because of later' type warning, but he got it.

"I'll try and I will." Hiccup kissed Astrid's cheek quickly and smiled at his mother before leaving.

Astrid and Valka caught up with the kids and their dragons at the Academy.

Ingrid's Gronkle, Rex, had recently got under control thanks to Fishlegs and Meatlug with some assistance from Toothless the Alpha. Rex was currently sniffing Irena all over, making her giggle.

Ben and his Nightmare, Strikefire, were nearby, watching. Ben seemed to have a huge crush on Ingrid at the moment. Unfortunately, Ingrid

was oblivious.

"Alright guys," Astrid said in what Irena would call 'an outside voice', effectively shushing all the teenagers. "We're working on speed today."

Irena ran from Ingrid's side to Astrid's, who held the little girl close to her. If it was something she was doing just because or because of the previous day's events, she wasn't sure, but Irena leaned against her a little.

"Does that mean time trials?" asked Ben.

"Yes,"

Ben smiled smugly. For a Nightmare, Strikefire was very fast. Not as fast as say, Helga's Nadder, but he was totally the fastest boy.

"Aw man," Ingrid kicked the dirt with her foot. Gronkle's weren't known for their speed and Rex was the slowest dragon in two years of dragon training.

"But, seeing as some dragons aren't as fast as others, we've decided to make things more equal this time." Time trials was more about beating your own time than beating someone else, but it was hard not to compare yourself to others in something like that.

The smile on Ingrid's face could've melted the heart of a Screaming Death. She loved her Gronkle to death, but she always (_always_) came in last for time trials. Astrid smiled back.

"You'll be grouped off by your dragon's class." Valka explained.

That meant Ingrid and Rex against only Calder and his Hotburple, Bubble. More evenly matched.

Valka and Cloudjumper took the skies to watch the kids, Astrid and Stormfly were keeping track of time, and Irena had the most important job of all. She got to tell the kids when to go.

Ingrid and Rex beat Bubble by thirty seconds, which sent the teenager into a happy dance when she landed. Calder was a good sport and congratulated Ingrid, making Ben almost seethe with jealousy, because she blushed vividly. Irena giggled at that.

After lunch, they worked on evasive maneuvers and then it was time to go home. Astrid caught Calder before he left.

"Did you let Ingrid beat you?" Astrid asked. As much as Astrid liked the girl, she couldn't always be a winner.

Calder's expression was serious. "Honestly I didn't. I was thinking about it, but Bubble got tripped up on a turn anyway."

"Alright," Astrid smiled at him. "Better turns on Monday, right?"

"Yeah," Calder smiled. He turned to the Hotburple. "Come on, let's go home."

Bubble made an agreeable noise and boy and dragon left.

Valka and Astrid smiled at each other over Irena's head.

Astrid picked Irena up off the barrel she was sitting on and put her on the ground. "Alright, we have something we need to check on really quick. Wait here with Stormfly and Cloudjumper, okay?"

Irena nodded and Stormfly nuzzled her side, cooing gently. Cloudjumper, who had taken a liking to her as well, put his wing over her, making her laugh hysterically.

Astrid and Valka went in to one of the pens, but Irena didn't notice which and she didn't care. The dragons were sniffing her and nuzzling her and she was very happy about that.

"Hey little one,"

Irena looked to her left. She smiled and caught the word she wanted to call him before it left her tongue. "Hi,"

"Where's Astrid?" he asked her. He knew the answer already but, he was supposed to be clueless. He was playing along to surprise her. Toothless curled up next to his friends.

Irena pointed. "With your mommy."

"Okay, thanks." Hiccup went in the direction she pointed.

Irena frowned a bit. She didn't think he'd like it much if she stared calling him Daddy, but somehow it suited him more than it did her father. She didn't really understand it. Stormfly nuzzled her, catching the little blonde by surprise and getting a giggle out of her.

Just then, a tiny blue terror scampered towards her.

"Where'd the Terror go?" a somewhat believable worried Hiccup voice asked louder than necessary.

"Who knows? She could be anywhere!" Astrid's voice had the same inflection, but Irena didn't notice. She held her breath as she reached out for the dragon, who was sniffing the ground, and grabbed it. She had never held a Terror before. Sharpshot didn't like to be cuddled.

"I got it!" Irena shouted, holding the hatchling in her hands. The blue reptile curled up in her hands and purred.

"She likes you," Astrid said as she approached. Hiccup was close to her side and Valka was right behind them.

Irena smiled and stroked the Terror with her index finger. "What's her name?"

Hiccup shrugged. "Not sure. You should ask her trainer."

"Who's that?"

The response prompted all three adults to smile at her in a way that told her the answer. Her smile was huge and she stood up to hug each of them, setting the baby Terror down carefully first, of course.

"Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!" she repeated over and over, bouncing up and down. The grownups laughed and the Terror, startled by the noise, flew clumsily up to Irena's shoulder.

"You two are going to be great friends." Valka said kindly as the tiny Terror nuzzled the side of Irena's head, making the four year old laugh.

"What do you want to name her?" Astrid asked. Dragons were very smart and learned their names quickly.

Irena thought for a moment. "Safira,"

"Cute," Astrid said, smiling.

Safira seemed to agree as she licked Irena's cheek.

"What do you think, bud?" Hiccup asked his dragon, reaching out to pet him. Terrors were not Toothless' favorite dragon species, but as Alpha, shooting a blast of fire into one's mouth would be frowned upon.

If she makes Irena happy, I'll put up with her. Toothless grumbled. Hiccup smirked. _As long as you don't try to take my fish, we'll be just fine, Safira.

>

>Yes, Alpha. The Terror squeaked. Irena giggled at the squeak and reached up to her shoulder to grab the Terror. She cuddled Safira close to her.

"How's that for a surprise, Irena?" Hiccup asked.

"The best!" she exclaimed, bouncing a little. She didn't look at all like a little girl who most of her life probably terrified of her father. She was as bubbly as any four year old and she loved to hug people. Children were so resilient.

Hiccup smiled.

Neither of them were sure exactly what happened or how Astrid ended up in Hiccup's room. Not that they minded. The only person who truly would mind was Astrid's mother and it was high time that she learned that twenty year olds did not have a bedtime.

Toothless was standing watch to make sure nothing got anything worse than cuddling. The Night Fury figured it killed the mood when your giant reptilian best friend is watching you intently from the corner. And, he supposed, when a four year old and a tiny dragon were in the other room.

Thankfully, they were just laying there. They weren't really talking either. They weren't even facing each other. They were just laying there, holding hands, staring at the ceiling.

You two are mind-numbingly boring. Toothless warbled before heating

up his rock bed and curling up on it.

"Are we not entertaining enough for you, bud?"

I'm trying to sleep, you scrawny little toothpick. Let me sleep!

"Good night, you useless reptile."

Toothless growled a little, pulling his wings tighter around his head.

Astrid laughed and rolled over, putting her hand under her cheek. "Sometimes I swear that he was your older brother in a past life."

He looked over at her. "Does that mean I'm the annoying little brother?"

"Yes," she smirked.

"Does that mean for once that the little brother gets the beautiful girl?" he rolled over to face her, a stupid grin on his face.

She shrugged a little. "I don't know... Toothless is getting pretty handsome."

He started laughing. "Oh no, I'm loosing my girlfriend to my best friend!"

"Oh no! You caught us."

"How long has this been going on?"

"We've been meeting up in secret for about a year."

He pressed the back of his hand against his forehead as if he was scandalized, but he was still smiling. "Oh no. Woe is me! I've lost my true love to a dragon!"

She laughed for a second before stopping abruptly. Did he just call her his true love? No one went as far to call someone that unless they were serious about it. You don't mess around about calling someone your true love. "Hiccup, what did you just say?"

"I didn't say anything wrong!" he said suddenly, his face full of confusion. "I can't screw up that fast!"

"No," she said quietly, propping herself up on her elbow. "You... repeat what you said."

"I said..." his eyes went wide. "Astrid, wait, I don't, I didn't mean-wait, well, I suppose I did, Uh, do, but I...um, didn't mean to-"

She shut him up by kissing him. "Do you really feel that way?"

"Yeah, I have. For a long time. I just... didn't want to scare you off or something." he replied quietly. He started messing with one of

her tiny braids in his hair unconsciously. What an idiot! She could up and leave him right then.

"Hiccup,"

"What?"

She smiled before pulling him closer to her. "You're lucky we're even." she said before kissing him again. They had only thrown around the 'L' word a few times. It was a scary, overwhelming thing to feel towards someone and neither wanted to be unsure before they said it.

It lasted just a little too long, earning them a squawk from a still awake Toothless. They separated and then Astrid cuddled against him and he wrapped his arms around her without a second thought. He hoped that sometime soon, this would be a regular occurrence.

"I love you," he said quietly into her hair. She loved him back. Perhaps she hadn't truly said it, but she meant it. He knew she did. "I love you so much."

"I love you too," her soft reply was muffled by her close proximity to him, but he heard it, and in his head it sounded like it was accompanied by music. This was his chance.

"Marry me," he blurted suddenly.

"What?" she pulled back a little and looked up at him. Her blue eyes were dancing with confusion.

"Marry me," he repeated. His face fell. "Unless you don't want to, but that's okay! We can forget I ever- ow! What was that for?" he demanded, rubbing his side. She punched him.

"For thinking I'd say no. Of course I'll marry you, you muttonhead. It took you long enough to ask."

He smiled widely and then kissed her. And it was a long enough kiss to make Toothless grumble at them and leave the room.

This wasn't the plan! He wanted it to be special for her! He wanted it to be perfect! He had a schedule, a gosh darn _schedule_ all those weeks ago and everything fell through! But at least she said yes. They were getting married. He'd have to thank Snotlout again for the advice and-

Dear Odin. They were getting married.

They were getting _married_.

"We're getting married," she murmured with a soft smile finding his hand and squeezing it.

"I hope you know that you're not going anywhere tonight."

"It's about time my mom learned that I don't need a curfew." she smirked before kissing him again.

Irena was going to flip in the morning and let's not even get started

on their mothers, but for right now, it was just them.

And that was exactly how they wanted it.

* * *

><p>AN: I don't think they did the frickle frackle, I'm pretty sure they were just cuddiling but, whatever floats your boat (oh my, as I typed the marry me line, the "Romantic Flight" part of "Hiccup the Chief" from the HTTYD2 soundtrack started playing and it was lovely).**_

**Anyway, there's the proposal! I was flipping out about writing it and all my ideas didn't end up working so I just rolled with the moment (In that moment, I swear I was Hiccup). I hope it was okay! **

**FYI, my fluff won't ever be amazing. I've never kissed anyone ever, so I'm not exactly sure how that works and feels and what not. I'll have to ask my nonexistent boyfriend later... **

**We'll get Irena's reaction next chapter and probably others' too (Yes, Hiccup cleared it with Astrid's father a long time ago. I'll get to that next chapter as well).**

**I'm going to do a shameless self-plug here. I have a HTTYD three shot called Unexpected up as well as it's companion-type piece Little Gust of Wind. They're about Astrid and Hiccup's reaction to their first child (they don't fit into this universe). I also have a HTTYD/Brave crossover fic that will make you **feel** things called Brave Little Warrior. I'd appreciate it if you could check them out! **

**Thanks so much for reading and please review if you can! I love hearing from you! **

**As always, if you need/want to talk or vent or anything, feel free to PM me! **

**You guys are awesome. See you soon!**

9. Chapter 9

I'm back everyone!

* * *

><p>"To love someone is to receive a glimpse of heaven."** -Karen Sunde**_

* * *

><p>Irena bounced into the main room of the house the next morning, expecting to see Hiccup scribbling away on something like usual.<p>

What she didn't expect to see was Astrid sprawled on the floor and getting attacked by Toothless licking her. But that's exactly what she saw. Astrid was laughing hysterically.

"Astrid?" Irena asked curiously. When had she gotten there? Safira had scampered toward the bowl that had become hers. There was fish in it.

"Hi, Irena." Astrid replied through her laughter. Toothless finally gave up and Astrid sat up and wiped the slobber from her person, still laughing.

"When did you come?"

"I, Uh, actually I didn't leave."

Irena's eyes widened. There wasn't an extra bed in the house. "Where did you sleep?"

Astrid chuckled some. "I slept in Hiccup's room."

Oh, well that was nice of him. "Did he sleep on the floor?"

Astrid laughed again. "No, sweetheart."

Now why would they sleep in the same bed? Oh. "Were you cold?"

Astrid was smiling at her innocence as she stood up. "Not exactly."

Grown-ups were so confusing.

"Hiccup! Irena's awake!" Astrid yelled. Hiccup came out of his room. Actually, more like stumbled. He was always a little clumsy and that made Irena giggle.

"Good morning," he told her, smiling more than usual.

"Good morning!" Irena replied.

"We have something to tell you." Hiccup told the little girl. He stood next to Astrid and they shared a smile.

"What is it?"

"You tell her." Astrid nudged Hiccup with her elbow.

"Me? Okay. Um, Irena, Astrid and I are getting married."

Irena smiled and started bouncing. "Really?"

"Really." the adults replied together.

"We don't have a date or anything, but it's happening." Hiccup added.

"That's why Toothless was attacking me. He's excited."

Irena ran at both of them, hugging them both at the same time as best as a four year old could before just hugging Astrid.

"You're going to be my mommy." Irena said almost as if it was a

dream. It was wonderful. She got a dragon and a mommy in two days! She had the best luck! She was the luckiest little girl in the whole world!

Astrid crouched down to her height. "I guess I will be your mommy, huh? Well, I've never been a mommy before. I don't know if I'll be any good."

"You're already the best mommy ever!" Irena announced. And she meant it with every fiber of her little being.

Astrid hugged her. She hoped she'd be able to live up to Irena's expectations. "You're the best little girl."

After Astrid fixed Irena's hair, Astrid said they had to face her parents, so that's where they went. Irena was in between Hiccup and Astrid, holding one of both of their hands. Toothless was following behind and Safira was on Irena's shoulder.

Ingrid was playing with her little brother and Rex next to their house when they caught sight of Irena. Ingrid knelt next to her brother and told him something. The little boy glanced at Irena and nodded. Ingrid nudged him forward.

The boy, Colby, if Irena remembered right, came over rather shyly.

"Do you want to play?"

Irena smiled. None of the kids really wanted to play with her, she still hadn't figured out why. Colby was only three and very shy. Irena looked up at Hiccup hopefully.

"Go on," he said encouragingly. Berk was so small and close that kids bounced around between their friends' houses all the time. If somebody's parents didn't know where their kid was, it was likely their neighbor did.

Irena smiled and followed Colby to where Ingrid was. Safira jumped down from Irena's shoulder to sniff the new people. Colby giggled.

"We'll be back in a little while." Hiccup said, but it fell on deaf ears. The three children were giggling wildly at Safira's eager sniffing.

"She's your dwagon?" Colby asked Irena.

Irena nodded. "I got her yesterday."

"Wow," Colby said, amazed.

"What's her name?" Ingrid asked, patting the tiny blue creature that settled on Rex's sleeping head.

"Safira," Irena replied.

"That's a good name," Ingrid told the little girl.

Irena smiled.

"Ingrid, dear, could you come in for a moment?" a voice called from in the house.

"Okay, Mom!" Ingrid yelled back. She turned to the younger kids. "Don't go to far, okay? I'll be right back."

Irena and Colby nodded seriously and Ingrid went in the house.

Colby smiled mischievously at Irena. "Tag!" he shouted, poking Irena and running.

"No fair!" Irena giggled. "I wasn't ready!" she went after him, chasing him in big, lopsided circles. Safira huffed indignantly. She didn't want to be left out of the game, so she ran after Irena.

After a good thirty seconds of intense giggling, Irena finally caught up to Colby. "Tag!" she shouted, touching his shoulder. Colby giggled and started chasing her. Safira flew clumsily next to Irena. Rex grumbled and went to find a quieter place.

"Hey Colby," said a voice. Both Irena and Colby stopped. Safira tried to hover, but, being little, she fell to the ground with a soft thump.

"Oh no!" Irena exclaimed, gathering the tiny dragon in her arms. "Are you okay, Safira?"

Safira replied by licking Irena's nose and humming. Yes, she was okay. She settled on Irena's shoulder.

"Why are you playing with her?" It was the girl that Irena first talked to soon after coming. The six year old with wavy brown hair. Irena had learned her name was Dagny. There was another girl and three boys next to her.

Colby grabbed Irena's hand and said bravely. "She's my friend."

Irena smiled. She had a friend.

"Why would you want to be friends with her?" the girl asked meanly, her arms were crossed.

Irena's smile faltered. What was wrong with her? She was nice girl, wasn't she? Maybe they knew her parents didn't like her.

"She's nice," Colby said quietly.

"None of us want to be her friend." Dagny said. The other children didn't look quite as sure as she did. Dagny looked at Irena. "We don't like you."

"Why?" Irena asked innocently.

"Your mom and dad didn't want you. You're an orphan." Dagny smiled at the use of the word.

Irena scowled. Her parents might not have liked her, but Hiccup and

Astrid did!

"Chief Hiccup only keeps you around 'cause he feels bad for you."

"That's not true!" Irena said loudly, stomping her foot. She knew it wasn't true! She dropped Colby's hand. Safira squawked and flew to Colby's shoulder. Colby looked nervous.

"Yes it is! He doesn't like you either!" Dagny said.

"Yes he does!" Irena said, taking a step forward. What would this girl know about what Hiccup bought of her? She knew he loved her. He told her all the time now. She loved him back.

"How come he almost gave you away then?"

"He apologized!" Irena countered. She knew why he did what he did. Irena was mad now.

"You're just a poor little orphan, Irena. No one likes you. Your own parents didn't even like you. You're too weird to have friends."

"You're mean! You lie." Irena said to Dagny. "I don't like you."

"Good," Dagny said shortly, before reaching out and pushing Irena down. "I don't like when dumb people like me anyway."

Irena burst into tears, more about the confrontation and the act of the push rather than the actual pain of it (it didn't hurt much). Behind her, Colby started to cry as well from fright, most likely. Safira jumped from his shoulder to the ground and crawled into Irena's lap.

"What is all this commotion about?" Ingrid and Colby's mother said, exiting the house. Ingrid slipped out behind her. She looked at the scene in front of her. Irena sitting on the ground in tears, Colby wailing behind her, and a smug Dagny. Behind Dagny stood the other children, looking uncomfortable. "Two too many criers." the woman muttered.

Ingrid went to Colby to calm him down. Ingrid's mother was more than halfway to Irena when a nervous looking Astrid and Hiccup rounded the corner.

"What happened?" Hiccup asked, concerned. Astrid beat Ingrid's mother to Irena.

The woman stopped and turned to Hiccup. "I don't know, I was just about to ask that myself. I suppose we'll wait until everyone is calm again.

Astrid moved Safira to the ground and helped Irena stand up before crouching next to her. "Are you okay, Irena?"

Irena nodded tearfully.

"Good," Astrid said, dusting off Irena's dress. "What happened,

little one?"

Irena sniffled and took a shaky breath and almost spoke before starting to cry again.

"It's okay, you're okay." Astrid promised.

Ingrid was holding Colby and he was calming down.

Hiccup knelt next to Irena. "You're not hurt are you?"

Irena shook her head and practically threw herself at him. He was thrown off balance and fell onto his rear, but he caught the little girl.

"It's alright, Irena." he was startled. What caused her to act like this? He and Astrid exchanged a worried glance.

Dagny tried to sneak away.

"No," Ingrid's mother said sternly to the six year old, grabbing her arm. "No one is leaving until we know what happened."

Dagny crossed her arms stubbornly.

When Colby and Irena were both only sniffling, the adults figured they could start asking what happened.

Colby pointed at Dagny, who looked angry. She hated tattletales.

"What about her, sweetheart?" his mother asked.

"Mean," he whimpered.

"Mean to who exactly?"

Colby pointed again, this time to Irena, who was sitting on Hiccup's lap, leaning against him and sucking her thumb. He was holding her close.

"Is that true, Irena?" Astrid asked gently. Irena nodded. "What did she do?"

Dagny looked ready to explode.

Irena took her thumb out of her mouth. "She said I was weird. And that no one liked me." Irena looked up at Hiccup. "She said you didn't like me either and that you only kept me 'cause you feel bad for me."

"That's not true. You know that, right?" Hiccup asked Irena.

Irena nodded, putting her thumb back in her mouth.

"Me and Rex like you," Ingrid said to Irena. "And I know Colby does too, right?"

Colby nodded and Ingrid put him on the ground.

"Ben likes you too." Ingrid added.

"You're a sweet girl." Ingrid's mother added.

"Don't forget about me." Astrid said, smiling at Irena. "And Stormfly and Toothless like you."

"Don't forget about Cloudjumper and my mom." Hiccup joined in. "And Safira of course."

Irena smiled a little and stood up, her thumb still in her mouth. Hiccup stood up too. Safira flew back up to Irena's shoulder. Astrid stood up as well and took Irena's hand.

"Push," Colby said suddenly.

"What?" Ingrid asked her brother.

"Dagny pushed Irena. Irena fell." Ben said.

The three adults looked towards Dagny, who still looked angry.

Hiccup walked towards her. He knew she was kind of a difficult child. He was awful at disciplining. He wasn't her parent, but Irena was his daughter and he was chief. That has to count for something, right?

"Dagny, is that true?"

She looked down and muttered something.

"Look up and repeat what you said, please." He didn't get down to her level. He felt kind of bad looking down on her like this, but she had to learn somehow.

She did as she was told. "Yeah," she grumbled.

"Why?" Hiccup asked her.

"She's weird." Dagny said, looking indifferent.

"That's no reason to tease her and push her down, is it?"

"She was playing with Colby. She might get him weird too."

"Weirdness isn't contagious, Dagny. And even if it was, Irena's not weird. Why do you think she is?"

"Because she doesn't have any parents. Something must be wrong with her."

"Everyone's got different kinds of families." Hiccup said. "Irena might not have parents anymore, but she has me. And she's got Astrid too. And we love her like your parents love you. And besides that, it's not nice to push anyone. For any reason. Unless they're trying to hurt you."

Dagny sighed. "Can I go home now?"

Was she really not understanding this? "No, Dagny. Not until you

apologize."

"Fine," Dagny stomped around him and stood in front of Irena. "I'm sorry." she didn't sound at all sorry.

"Okay," Irena replied. She didn't want to forgive her.

Dagny turned to Hiccup. "But-!"

He had no tolerance for bullies. His childhood was terrible and he wanted to make sure that no one else had to go through that. "She doesn't have to forgive you. You hurt her. She accepted it. That's all you can ask for."

Dagny rolled her eyes. "Can I go home now?"

"Yes,"

Dagny turned to leave.

"I'll walk you home, Dagny." Ingrid's mother said. "To explain what happened. Ingrid, watch Colby please. I'll be back soon."

Dagny grumbled and she walked off with Ingrid's mother.

"That was harder than I expected." Hiccup said, coming back by Irena. "You're sure you're not hurt?"

Irena nodded.

"Can Irena play with us?" one of the boys that was behind Dagny asked. They weren't controlled by Dagny anymore. The kids wanted to play with Irena. Irena was nice.

Hiccup looked down at Irena, who only held her arms up towards him. She didn't want to play anymore. She wanted to go home.

Hiccup picked her up. "What do say, kid?"

"I want to go home." she said, curling against him. Safira settled on his shoulder. "Later."

"Later?" Hiccup said to the kids. They nodded.

Colby waved at Irena. "Bye-bye."

Irena waved back.

* * *

><p>"In happier news," Astrid said to Irena, who was curled up on Hiccup's lap. "My father didn't kill him, so the wedding's still on."<p>

"Good," Irena giggled.

"You didn't really think I'd ask you without talking to him first, did you? He's kind of scary." Hiccup asked as Astrid sat next to him.

Astrid chuckled. "I didn't know you had a plan that failed, dork. I thought you were just asking me out of the blue."

"Your mother's reaction was priceless."

"What'd she do?" Irena asked.

"She squealed and then started crying and then almost crushed us in a hug." Astrid replied.

Irena giggled and then looked at Hiccup. "Did you tell your mommy?"

"Yep," he replied.

"What'd she do?"

"She cried and hugged us." Hiccup told her.

"She was a lot quieter about it than my mom." Astrid laughed.

So Irena really was going to have a family! A mom and a dad and two grandmas and a grandpa and cousins! Maybe even brothers and sisters eventually! Married people had babies. Who knows what could happen.

"You look happy, little one." Astrid commented.

"I am happy." Irena smiled.

"When are we going to announce it?" Hiccup asked Astrid.

Astrid snorted. "As if no one knows. My mom's not very good with secrets." Irena giggled.

"Well, we still have to announce it."

"Tonight?" Astrid asked.

"_Tonight_" Hiccup asked, sounding a little frightened.

"Why not? You asked me, I said yes. Ta-da. End of story. Easy."

"Alright, tonight it is." he replied. "But what are we going to say?"

"Say that you're getting married." Irena said, as if it was obvious.

Hiccup and Astrid laughed.

"Good plan, Irena." Hiccup said before kissing the top of her head. "That's exactly what we'll do."

Irena smiled.

"Um, excuse me?" Hiccup didn't care much for being the center of attention.

Everyone looked towards where he was standing. Astrid was holding his one hand and Irena had his other.

"Don't sound so scared, babe." Astrid told him. "You're announcing a marriage, not an attack."

"I...uh... we have an announcement to make." he took a deep breath. "Astrid and I are engaged."

That simple sentence was enough to send the entirety of the Great Hall into cheers.

"About time!" someone shouted.

"Long time coming!"

"Mulch, you owe me a yak!"

"Knew it!"

"We need some knew babies around here!"

Astrid and Hiccup turned an embarrassing shade of red, making Irena giggle.

After the crowd settled down enough, Hiccup and Astrid were making their way to sit down. People were congratulating them.

"Irena!" yelled a voice. It was the boy from earlier. Jakob. "Come sit with us."

"Go on, sweetheart." Astrid said.

Irena smiled and ran off to join the other children at their table. Dagny was sitting with her parents, looking very upset.

What a great day.

* * *

><p>AN: Yay announcements! Irena's got friends now! And a family! :) Things are going pretty good for them, huh? *maybe manichal laughter in the distance*. Anyway, I'm looking at the wedding being in 2 to 4 chapters. **_

**Dagny's kind of a mix of every person that's ever teased me. Colby is adorable. Jakob might be get more important too. **

**Thanks for reading! Please review if you can! I love hearing from you! **

**As always, PM me if you need or want to talk about anything.**

10. Chapter 10

**Hi! Here's the next chapter!**

* * *

><p>"_**Of all the things you choose in life, you don't get to choose what your nightmares are. You don't pick them; they pick you." - John Irving**_

* * *

><p>Irena made fast friends with all of the children, especially Jakob and Colby. The three of them were immediately inseparable, despite the age difference, however slight.<p>

Irena's friendships with the boys ensured that she wouldn't have to be carted around to different adults to be babysat. She could spend the day playing with her friends around the island. They never caused any trouble.

Sometimes though, Irena wanted to play House instead of playing Explorer with the boys. Luckily for her, the girls on the island around her age loved that game almost as much as Toothless loved bellyrubs.

Of course, when a bunch of girls between the ages of three and nine play house, that entails dolls and boys being dragged into the game as well as a lot of imagination. Unfortunately (not so much for the boys), the boys had all very much refused and not one would play House. It was just the girls and their dolls and imaginations.

Irena was relatively new to the game and therefore had yet to name her made-up husband. But she had Lena and a very nice imaginary house with a lovely pretend fireplace and Safira was their family pet. Kaida was at home in her real room because she wasn't feeling well (everyone knows toy dragons can get sick).

Dagny was grounded for a while and without her being bossy, the girls could actually have fun.

Irena was sitting on a log with Lena cradled in her arms and Safira curled at her feet. The girls were talking about silly things, pretending they knew what they were talking about.

Irena thought herself to be a rather good pretend mommy to Lena, although she wasn't exactly sure what Lena thought. She didn't speak dolly. Astrid did though. She said Lena told her that Irena was a wonderful mommy.

Speaking of mommies and Astrid, the wedding date was set quickly. It was sooner that Irena had expected it would be, but still far enough away where invitations could be sent out to other places. There was a lot of people getting invited.

Irena was getting a new, special, extra pretty dress for the occasion. So was Astrid. But Astrid wasn't nearly as excited about it as Irena was.

Safira was going to wear one of Lena's dresses whether she liked it or not.

Hiccup was freaking out. Astrid was calming him down. It was a pretty normal cycle. And with Irena out of the house for most of the time, there was maybe a lot more kissing going on.

"Irena?" Ginia, a slightly pudgy five year old asked.

"What?" Irena wasn't sure if they were in time-out of the game or not. Sometimes they slipped between gameplay and actual talking.

"Do you think Astrid will have a baby?" Real talk.

"Maybe." Irena shrugged. That was a weird question. "Why?"

"I dunno. I was just wondering. My mommy was talking about it."

Would Astrid have a baby someday? Irena would be a big sister then and she'd like that very much. Hiccup and Astrid wouldn't forget her if they had a new baby, she knew they wouldn't. Babies needed lots of attention, but Irena knew she would never be forgotten.

Simple questions have a way of distracting a four year old's mind and Irena was constantly thinking about it all day. When she finally went home, she made sure to open the door extra loud, in case there was kissing going on. Fortunately, there didn't seem to be any as Hiccup and Astrid were on opposite sides of the table, both leaning over a map, deep in concentration. They looked up, however, when Irena shut the door.

"Astrid?" Irena asked, bounding over.

"What?" Astrid asked the little girl. Irena stopped directly next to her chair.

"Are you going to have a baby?"

Hiccup nearly fell out of his chair. Toothless kept him in place by pushing him with his snout. Safira was perched in the open window like a bird.

Astrid laughed and pushed Irena's bangs back. "No, sweetie."

"Not ever?"

"Maybe eventually, but not anytime soon." Astrid looked to Hiccup. "I promise."

Hiccup ran his hand nervously through his hair and gave her a shaky smile. There was way too much going on right now for a baby to be added to the mix.

Astrid rolled her eyes and turned back to Irena. "Any particular reason you're asking, little one?"

"Ginia said her mommy was talking about you. She said something about babies." Irena replied.

"People seem to forget we already have a little girl." Astrid pulled Irena into her lap. Irena smiled and settled against her. Astrid liked children well enough, but having her own was rather far down her to do list. She was a pretty busy person and Hiccup was also ridiculously busy. Everyone just assumed the moment they got married, they'd drop everything and have a baby (it didn't work that fast,

just for the record. Certain things needed to happen first). Astrid thought having Irena might lessen the baby talk (she was more important at the moment than any hypothetical babies were anyhow). She was wrong.

Hiccup still looked like he was recovering from the shock of Irena's sudden question.

"Calm down," Astrid told him. "You look like you're going to pass out."

"I won't. I promise." he replied. Toothless snorted, earning him a glare.

Irena giggled a little. She decided the best way to calm him down was to distract him. "Why do you have a map?"

He smiled a little. "I'm planing something."

"What?" Irena asked.

"I'm going exploring in a few weeks." Because, why not? He hadn't gone in a while and he really needed a nice long break. Between the wedding and his new responsibilities as a father and everything else, he was really wearing himself out. His mother had been the one to convince him and between her and Astrid and Gobber he was sure that he'd come back to the village and it would still be in one piece.

"Yup, because I won't let him ever go again after we get married." Astrid said sarcastically. That's when Irena knew that Hiccup was going alone.

"Where are you going to go?" Irena questioned. He had told her a few times about his expeditions before, especially when they were going through the Book of Dragons and he had a really cool story to tell about the time when he saw a real actual kind of the dragon that was on the page when he was traveling.

"Anywhere." he said, smiling. "I went to the west when I found you." he pointed to the island where he found her and then ran his finger in the opposite direction. "I'm probably going to head east and see what I can find." Although he was probably going to go a little west too, to see if he could figure out where Sola, Irena's home island, was.

"How long are you going to be gone?"

"I'm aiming for two weeks."

Two weeks was a long time to a four year old. She supposed she'd be staying at Astrid's house for that time but Astrid was going to be super busy when Hiccup left. He was chief and she seemed to be his right hand.

"Come here, little one." Hiccup said gently after looking at the expression on her face. Irena slipped off Astrid's lap and walked around the table to him. He took her hand. "I'm not leaving for a little while yet."

"Good," the little girl said quietly. She didn't want him to go because what if he didn't come back?

She had the sad face on and it was making him feel guilty. "I promise I'll only be gone two weeks. That's only fourteen days, right?"

Irena nodded.

"That's not too long, is it?"

She shrugged sadly. Safira scampered up to her shoulder to nuzzle the side of her head.

She didn't want him to go.

* * *

><p>"Maybe I'll only be a week." Hiccup said to Astrid. It was a lovely evening. They were sitting on the ground outside of his house watching the children play Flightmare tag. Arvindale's Fire was going that night and everyone was excited about it. Irena hadn't been frozen yet, she was quick.<p>

Hiccup was sitting kind of sideways and Astrid was more or less in front of him. If she was any closer to him, she probably would've been in his lap.

"You deserve two weeks." she told him, leaning back against him. "You've been stressing out a little."

He wrapped his arms around her. "But Irena-"

"She's just not used to your adventurous personality. She wasn't around when you left every other month to look for new islands. She feels safe with you and I think she's worried that when you leave, she won't. She'll be fine here, I promise she will."

He still looked concerned. "But-"

She smiled, tilted her head up and looked at him upside-down. "Your inner daddy is showing, babe."

He blinked a few times. Irena had referred to him as her daddy, but had never called him that directly. No one else had ever called him that either. Being called a parent or a father was one thing, being called a daddy, well, that was entirely different! "Is-is that good?"

"I think it's cute." she told him sincerely. It was. Since Irena came, there was a side to him she'd never seen before. Sure, he'd always been a fun, playful, goofy dork who loved to show people new things, but he had a special way with Irena. She looked at him like he was the world and to her, Astrid supposed she was.

He smiled his lopsided smile. "Aren't I always cute?"

"Depends on who you ask." she said, grinning.

"Am I cute to you?"

She shrugged. "Eh,"

He looked scandalized for a quick minute before it turned mischievous. He found the ticklish spot on her side and she squealed with laughter.

"S-stop it, Hic-hiccup!" she laughed, trying to push his hands away. Stormfly broke out of her game with Toothless to make sure her rider was okay. She made a grunting noise. Human mates sure showed affection in strange ways. Toothless rolled his eyes in response and grumbled at his Nadder friend. They started their game again.

"Say it then!" he demanded, determined not to let her win. She managed to flip herself around in his grasp and was pulling away with all her might.

"Never!" she cried out.

He only grinned and continued to tickle her. She pulled back so hard the momentum knocked them both to the ground, him landing rather ungracefully on top of her. He moved himself from the accidentally awkward position, but continued to tickle her.

He shook his head. "Say it and I'll stop!"

"Fine!" she exclaimed. "Fine, Hiccup! You're cute!"

He stopped tickling her immediately and smiled. "Thank you." He leaned down and kissed her.

She broke away abruptly and slapped his arm.

"What now?" he whined, rubbing his forearm.

"You didn't give me anytime to catch my breath, you dork!" she said, panting, still from the tickling. "Also, there are a lot of people out here."

"Oh right," he said sheepishly. Everyone was out waiting for Arvindale's Fire and Shimmer the Flightmare (the kids of the island had dubbed the dragon that name about three years back after Hiccup had somehow managed to convince it that the people of Berk were friends. Glimmer would pass over the village a few times after she was glowing. It made the children very happy. Glimmer never touched anyone though. They weren't quite to that point yet).

"Now help me up." she demanded.

He sat back and offered her his hand. She took it and he pulled her into a sitting position.

"Sorry about that, Milady."

She rolled her eyes and elbowed him roughly in the ribs. "You're just lucky I love you."

"That I am." he replied before kissing her cheek.

"It's starting!" cried Jakob from somewhere. Astrid and Hiccup looked

up. Sure enough, Arvindale's Fire had begun. Irena ran over to them.

"It's so pretty!" Irena exclaimed, sitting in Astrid's lap. Toothless and Stormfly had stopped their game again to look at the sight. Safira was nearby as well.

"Yes it is." Astrid replied, holding Irena close to her. Hiccup wrapped his arms around both of them from behind and Astrid leaned back against him.

Irena and Astrid were his girls and he wouldn't have it any other way.

* * *

><p>Irena sat up straight in bed, panting. Her arm hurt. Bad. She squinted at it in the faint light and she couldn't see anything and she knew it wasn't bleeding. Why did it hurt so bad? She started rubbing it repeatedly to try to make it stop hurting.<p>

Memories of her nightmare raced back into her head and she whimpered. Safira looked up from where she was curled on the foot of her trainer's bed and cooed softly. Her trainer was scared. The tiny dragon scampered up to Irena and nuzzled her. _Get your daddy, Irena!_ Safira whimpered. _I will come with you. You will be safe._

Irena seemed to understand her and snatched Kaida before following the little blue dragon to Hiccup's room. Irena stopped abruptly at the doorway. The moonlight was coming in just right so she could see him. He was sleeping soundly. She didn't want to wake him up!

But then again she didn't want to go back to bed either.

Safira didn't understand her hesitation and climbed right up on Hiccup, crawling all over him. When that didn't work, she licked his face.

He moaned and blinked his eyes open. "Safira?" he reached up and scratched the tiny dragon.

Safira trilled towards the door. Irena was standing in the door looking nervous.

Hiccup sat up. Safira scampered over next to Toothless, who had woken. Toothless picked his head up. "Irena? What's wrong?"

"I had a bad dream." Irena said quietly. "And my arm hurts." It still hurt pretty bad.

"Come here, little one."

Irena climbed up next to him and leaned against his side.

"What was your dream about?" Hiccup asked her softly.

"My daddy." she whimpered back, snuggling more against him. "He hurt me."

"It was just a dream, Irena." he promised, rubbing her back. How awful it must have been to be in her position, to be repeatedly and constantly physically hurt by someone who was supposed to love her. How awful it must be to relive it. "No one can hurt you here, I won't let them. You're safe."

She nodded slowly. It surprised him some that she wasn't more upset about this than she was about the thunderstorm a few weeks back.

"Which arm hurts?" He figured he knew already.

"This one," Irena held her arm out and they both looked at it. In the faint light, Irena could make out the scar on it.

Hiccup understood. Sometimes when he was having a bad day or woke up from a nightmare, his leg would hurt pretty bad. And it was impossible because it wasn't there anymore. The mind was a strange thing, it could make you feel pain in something that didn't exist anymore. Or, in Irena's case, an old wound with a terrible memory behind it.

He touched her arm gently. "Where does it hurt?"

"Everywhere." Irena admitted.

He touched it a few more times to check for any other injuries. It seemed fine.

"It feels better now." Irena told him.

"Good," Hiccup said, smiling a little.

Toothless came over and sniffed Irena a few times. She just smelled scared, not hurt. She was calming down quickly. He licked the scar on her arm and Irena smiled. Toothless cooed and went back to lay down. He allowed Safira curl up next to him.

"Can I stay with you?" Irena asked Hiccup. She didn't want to go back to her room.

"Sure," Hiccup told her. She smiled.

Irena curled up next to him, Kaida tucked in her arms.

"Good night, little one."

There was no response. Irena had already fallen asleep.

* * *

><p>AN: I have a Fanfiction Twitter now! I'll be posting updates on my writing there! I'd love for you to follow me! **_
PMiHFFwriter

**Hey everyone! Thanks for reading! And thank you all for your sweet reviews! I'd respond individually, but my computer and iPod hate me! Thank you all so much!**

_**I was an avid House player when I was little and I still play it

with my little neighbors when they ask. I also loved to play Freeze Tag growing up and the children of Berk's version of that game is Flightmare tag (for those of you that haven't seen the show or don't remember, Flightmares spray things with a mist to temporarily paralyze them. Astrid's uncle Finn was thought to have frozen in fear at the sight of it, bringing the Hofferson name dishonor, because they didn't know about the mist until Hiccup and the teens figured it out).**_

**Yes, I am having Hiccup go on a little adventure. It should be fun! **

**I've started my draft on the wedding already. I'm think I'll split it up into two chapters. If you like the four newest Disney princesses, I think you'll like it! They won't have too big of a big part, but I wanted to include them! I am aware that the suggested time periods of the movies make it nearly impossible for anyone but Merida to have met Hiccup and friends, but when I was little, I always thought that the princesses all knew each other (and had tea parties together) so I'm just expanding that idea.**

**As always, my PM inbox is always open and if my computer is nice to me, I'll respond ASAP. :)**

**Thanks for reading! Please Review if you can!**

11. Chapter 11

**Hello all!**

* * *

><p>"Simply having children does not make mothers." - John A. Shedd

* * *

><p>He was leaving today.<p>

He had decided to be gone only a week for Irena's sake. Her nightmares had been reoccurring since they day he told her he was leaving and she practically refused to let go of him during the day and he stayed with her until she fell asleep at night. It was worrying him, but Astrid and his mother still insisted he go.

Toothless was thrilled they were still going though and he had been making it nearly impossible to do anything last minute with all his bouncing around.

"You've got everything, right?" Astrid asked. She was leaning against a tree, her arms crossed loosely. Irena was holding onto the very edge of her skirt like Hiccup had seen small children do with their mothers countless times to stay close.

"I think so." he told her, digging through his pack one last time. Toothless bumped him anxiously with his snout. Come on! Hiccup laughed. "In a bit, bud. I promise." he stood up and smiled at her.

"I expect you to come back with the same number of limbs you're leaving with."

"Let's hope." he smiled crookedly.

"I expect you to be careful too, young man." Valka told him.

"I will, I swear."

Valka hugged him. "I mean it. You better come back to us in one piece."

"I'll try my best."

Valka pulled back and cupped his cheek in her hand. "You have fun. Try not to worry about us too much. We'll be alright."

He smiled. Toothless bumped him in the back, making him chuckle.

"If a dragon happens to follow you home, please make sure its friendly." his mother continued.

He laughed. "Will do."

"Hey," Astrid said.

Hiccup turned around.

"If you're going to run off with some girl you meet, I'd like a warning." the tone of her voice was playful, but there was a strange seriousness behind it.

"Now why would I go and do something stupid like that?" he asked, grabbing her hand. Irena was distracted by Toothless whimpering and nuzzling at her. He was telling her she'd be alright in his own little dragon way.

"I don't know." she shrugged, still smiling a little. "I hear the girls out east are pretty."

"Even if they are, I doubt they could hold a candle to you."

She blushed faintly, curse being a female. He smirked smugly. It wasn't very easy to get Astrid to blush. Before she could properly respond to his smug expression, Snotlout shouted from some distance away "Oh, gag me with a metal hand hook!"

"Seriously, get a room, you two." Tuffnut cringed.

"You guys are worse than my parents!" Ruffnut yelled.

Astrid scowled in the general direction of their friends and they shut up rather quickly.

"We'll see you when you come back, Hiccup!" Tuffnut yelled.

"Yeah, see ya!" Ruff added.

And the three of them hightailed it away. Hiccup rolled his eyes.

Ruffnut was still pining after Eret, but he barely gave her the time of day and Fishlegs had practically given up on her, though Snotlout was still trying to win her affections. Even Tuff had his eye on some girl. Despite the gang recently being bitten with the romance bug, they still gagged at Hiccup and Astrid (well, Fishlegs didn't).

"You are such a cheesy dork." Astrid said, punching him in the arm.

"Yeah, I know." he smiled. "But you love me for it."

She shrugged. "Well..."

He laughed and yanked her closer. "Come here, you." he kissed her firmly.

Valka smiled a little at them before scratching Toothless behind his ear flaps. Irena made a bit of a face.

When they finally broke apart, Astrid uncharacteristically threw her arms around him, startling him some. She spoke quietly. "I'm serious. Be careful."

"Of course," he replied. He tightened his hold on her and closed his eyes.

"I'll miss you." It was only a week, but it was going to feel like much longer than that.

"I'll miss you too." he whispered into her hair.

Toothless took their stillness as an opportunity to hit Hiccup with his tail. He knew Hiccup was going to miss her, but this was seriously taking _forever_.

"Ouch, bud." Hiccup complained. Toothless cackled at him and Hiccup patted his snout. "Almost." He looked up and saw Irena hovering near his mother, looking ready to cry, her disgusted expression gone. He went over to her and picked her up. She wound her arms around his neck and put her head on his shoulder before sniffing. "Don't cry, little one." he told her.

"I don't want you to go." she told him.

"I'll only be a week, I promise. You'll be here with Astrid and Stormly and Jakob and Colby. You probably won't even notice I'm gone."

"I will," she countered into his shoulder. "I don't want bad dreams."

Was her plan to break his heart today? "I know, bad dreams are pretty terrible, aren't they? But you'll be with Astrid and I'll tell you a secret about her if you'd like."

"What?" Irena asked, looking up at him.

"She's the best at making bad dreams go away." When did he get so good at winging it?

"Better than you?"

"Way better." he dropped his voice. "She's pretty scary, you know."

Irena giggled and Astrid raised an eyebrow at him. Alright. She'd roll with that accusation if it made Irena feel better. She wasn't that scary, was she? She looked to Toothless and patted him a few times, telling him to not let anything too crazy happen.

"And when I come home I'll tell you about everything I saw. All the dragons and all the people--"

"Will you draw them?" Irena asked hopefully.

"Sure I will. And I'll show you all of them when I get back. If you promise me something."

"What?"

"Promise me you'll learn to count to fifty without stopping." he was only half-joking.

She always got messed up at about thirty-five for some reason, even though she knew all her numbers. "I promise."

"Good." he smiled and kissed the side of her head. "You'll be a good girl, won't you?"

"Yeah," she smiled.

"What am I talking about? You're always good." he put her down. "I am going to miss you, little one."

Irena hugged him. "You be good too!"

"Why do you all keep telling me that?" Hiccup demanded, laughing.

"Because you're a klutz." Astrid told him.

"Thanks for summing that up." Hiccup chuckled. He looked to his dragon. "Ready to go bud?"

Toothless purred and crouched down, making it easier for Hiccup to get on.

"See you all in a week!" Hiccup said, clicking his prosthetic into place.

"Have fun," Astrid told him.

He smiled at all of them before patting Toothless' neck. "Let's go, bud."

Toothless squawked and took off, eager to explore.

Irena waved and Hiccup waved back before they flew away.

It would be a long week for everyone.

* * *

><p>Toothless had put Stormfly and Cloudjumper in charge of the dragons in his absence, at least that's what Hiccup thought was happening when he found the Nadder and the Stormcutter watching and listening to their Alpha with rapt attention that morning. How suiting, as their respective riders were in charge of the people. Both species would be in good hands, or, in the dragon's case, claws.<p>

Hiccup wasn't worried about the island in general. No, he knew that Berk would survive without him for a week. He was, however, worried about his daughter (although sometimes when that word came into his head, he had to stop and think).

Irena was a sweet, bubbly girl. She was only a little shy and only sometimes. But she tended to get pretty emotional. At least she was staying with Astrid. Astrid seemed to have a clear understanding (better than him most of the time) about how Irena's brain worked; what she was scared of, how she worked things out, and the reasoning behind everything she did. The nightmares were working her up considerably (her arm was pink from her constant rubbing to make the phantom pains go away. It had become a nervous habit in the last week) and he hoped they wouldn't get any worse and that Astrid would be able to calm her down.

Toothless crooned and turned his head to look at Hiccup. He could sense his rider was thinking too much. Irena would be fine. Astrid was taking care of her.

"Yeah, I know bud." Hiccup sighed, rubbing Toothless' neck. He had an idea that made him smile. "What do you say we add a bit of dramatic flair?"

Toothless groaned. As long as he didn't have to bring Astrid and Valka home a mangled, unconscious boy, he was up for some tricks. That didn't mean he had to be nice about it though.

Hiccup rummaged through the pack on the side of Toothless' saddle with one hand to find his helmet (it wasn't very good for just exploring. It was a bit hard to see out of due to some minor peripheral issues. He was trying to fix that). "Aw, come _on_ Toothless, where's your sense of _adventure_?"

Toothless responded by making an unamused noise and jerking to the left quickly, making Hiccup actually hold onto the saddle for fear of falling off into to the deep blue waters of the sea below. Toothless cackled, making the young chief scowl.

"Alright, you useless reptile," Hiccup put his helmet on. "Let's see what you've got!"

Safira squawked the moment Irena stepped in to Astrid's house. The Terror had never been there before and it smelled different than Irena's house. She hopped off the girl's shoulder, eager to explore.

Ramona smiled. She had no problem with dragons, but she was mildly afraid of heights, unlike her daughter. Ramona had a Terror as well,

she had taken a liking to the pinkish dragon her daughter had trained in stealth some years ago. His name was Zippy and he was... well, he was somewhere. He was trained in stealth, after all. "Well, there you girls are. I was worried you got lost."

Astrid shut the door behind her and sighed. Irena was trying to sneak up on Safira.

"Busy day, I take it?"

"I don't know how he does it, Mom." was Astrid's reply. "It was me, Valka, and Gobber, it's only been a day, and we're all exhausted." Even Stormfly and Cloudjumper were beat, and they didn't tire easily.

"Ah, well, he's definitely one of a kind. Heart of a chief, soul of a dragon, right?"

Astrid laughed a little. "Yeah. I'm glad we gave him the week off. He totally deserves it if everyday is like this." He hated asking for help, but after today, she wasn't going to let him decline her offers so easily.

"You better get used to being busy, dear." her mother replied. "It's only a matter of time-"

Astrid interrupted. "Until half of it's my job. I know. That's all I've heard today." There were two months left to their wedding. Part of Astrid wished it as sooner and the other part wished it was farther.

"You'll get used to it and you'll be absolutely be fine. The two of you are born leaders. You'll be an unstoppable force."

Astrid smiled at her mother and stifled a yawn.

"Why don't you go to bed, dear?" Ramona suggested.

"Good idea. Coming, Irena?"

Irena nodded, Safira once again perched on her shoulder.

"Good night, girls."

"Night, Mom."

Irena ran over and gave the older woman a quick hug, which she returned, before bounding back over to Astrid and holding her arms up in a silent request to be carried the rest of the way. Astrid smiled and obliged.

Ramona was pretty sure she blinked and missed Astrid grow up.

* * *

><p>Irena was curled against Astrid's side, her arms holding both Lena and Kaida close, Safira was curled up on her pillow. She was asleep, and peacefully so. Hopefully her nightmares had ended.<p>

Maybe Astrid was scary enough to scare away bad dreams. The blonde smiled to herself.

Astrid rolled over onto her back slowly so she wouldn't wake the little girl next to her. She never would've pictured herself as a mother, not even an adopted one, five years previous. No, back then she had been a fighter who rarely showed emotion. Hiccup had changed that.

She didn't want to sound sappy, but it was true. Hiccup had not only managed to change an entire island's view of him and of dragons, he had also managed to soften her some. Not that it was a bad thing necessarily. She was still as tough as Gronkle Iron when she needed to be, but she was a mother now and was going to be a wife in a short time.

Her fourteen year old self would've scoffed at the very idea of being in love and being tied down for the rest of her life with a child to look after. Her twenty year old self knew love was a wonderful thing and that she wasn't going to be tied down by being a mother or getting married. She and Hiccup treated each other as equals, because they were. He'd never expect her to be a quiet wife who did nothing but sew (she despised it, actually). They were adventurous, strong-willed, stubborn dorks together. Nothing could change that.

Irena made a sleepy little noise and snuggled even closer to her. Astrid smiled and rubbed her back gently.

Even though Astrid's life was a far cry from what she would've wanted it to be a few years ago, she loved it. She loved everything about it.

Hopefully it would never change.

* * *

><p>AN: Hope you liked this one! I didn't mean for Astrid to get all sappy at the end, but she did so, yeah. I tried my best to keep her in character, so sorry if she's slightly off. We'll get more Hiccup next chapter, I promise!**_

**There will be two more chapters until the wedding stuff starts (!) and it will be and will be split into three parts: Getting Visitors, Getting Prepared, and Getting Married. I'm very excited to write this (can you tell?). I will say this in advance: Viking/Norse culture intrigues me greatly. It's very unique and I love to learn about it (seriously, look at Viking Answer Lady's website if you don't know much about the culture. It's really interesting) I've read up on Viking weddings and while I think they're really cool, my wedding will be a little different. I know Berk is a village of Vikings, but they're, as much as it pains me to say it, ******fictional**_**** Vikings (I mean, they've got dragons for Odin's sake!), so I will be using lots of aspects of traditional Viking weddings, but I'll be twisting them around a bit. I hope that's okay with everyone! If you do want to read a to-the-book, historically correct Hiccupstrid wedding, there are a lot floating around on this site.

**_

_**Anyhooles, thanks so much for reading! Please let me know what

you thought of this chapter in the reviews. If you do, you'll receive an imaginary baby Night Fury! **_

**See you soon!**

12. Chapter 12

No quote today. I couldn't find one. :/

* * *

><p>"Now hold you hand up and tell her to sit."<p>

"Sit," Irena said, holding her hand up.

Safira chirped and sat politely, her little tail flicking.

Irena beamed. "I did it!"

"Yes you did." Astrid smiled. "Good job."

"Good girl, Safira." Irena praised the little blue dragon. Safira squawked happily and ran over to her friend for a scratch, which Irena happily gave.

There wasn't too much you could train a Terror to do other than simple commands, but that was alright. Terrors were a great first time dragon. Irena was a quick learner and so was Safira, so things were moving smoothly.

The Wednesday class had wrapped up, they had lunch, and Astrid had decided it was about time for Irena and Safira to have a lesson of their own. It was keeping her busy. Valka and Gobber were out in the village and Ingrid had stuck around and brought Colby to watch.

"Can Colby try?" Irena asked Astrid, looking up from rubbing Safira's tummy.

"If he wants to." Astrid replied, looking over at Colby and smiling. Colby smiled back nervously.

Irena looked over to her friend. "Do you want to try?"

Colby nodded nervously and Ingrid nudged him forward.

Irena put Safira down. "Listen to Colby, okay?"

Safira turned to face the boy, head cocked expectantly.

"Tell her to come." Astrid told Colby.

"Come, Safira." Colby commanded the blue dragon, albeit quietly.

Safira bounded over to the little boy's feet.

"Now tell her to sit."

"Sit." Colby said. Safira plopped down, looking up at the boy. Colby

giggled and scratched the dragon's head.

"Now you did it!" Irena chirped. Colby smiled and ran back to his big sister. Safira ran over to Irena, sitting on her head and crooning.

"You did good, Colby." Ingrid told her brother. Colby beamed.

Astrid smiled. Sure, getting a dragon to sit was a little thing, but to a kid it was kind of a big deal.

"Astrid,"

Astrid turned around to see Gobber and Grump in the doorway to the Academy.

"There's something goin' on in the fields. They won' listen ta me or Valka. Mind givin' us a hand, lass? They'll listen to you."

"I'll be right there." Astrid promised before turning back to the kids. Gobber and grump took off. "I have to go to the fields. Would you keep an eye on Irena, Ingrid?"

"Sure," Ingrid nodded.

Astrid climbed up on on Stormfly's back.

"Thanks."

"Anytime."

"Let's go, girl." Astrid said to Stormfly. Stormfly took off and they headed towards the fields.

Hiccup had been gone for three and a half days and it had practically been all nonstop running around since then. Astrid had finally gotten the time to do something with Irena and she had to leave her to fix something and the job was split between three more than capable people. Her stupid, stubborn boyfriend did it all by himself. She was going to sit him down and have a very serious discussion about accepting help when he came home.

Hopefully the next few days would go by quickly. Irena's nightmares had, unfortunately, not gone away. Her little arm was still pink from all the rubbing. She was a little trooper during the day now, but at this point, she was a little afraid to go to sleep. Both of them had barely slept the last few nights. Astrid hoped Hiccup coming home would make her nightmares cease permanently.

When Astrid and Stomfly made it to the fields, the shouting was quite loud. Gobber was trying and failing to hush everyone. Valka was standing next to Cloudjumper, looking more or less frazzled. Her communication skills were still a little rusty and she gave up trying, although she felt bad that she couldn't help.

Stormfly landed next to Cloudjumper and Astrid slipped off. Valka looked relieved. Astrid walked to the middle of the small crowd and held her hands up. "Everyone, shut up!" she shouted, effectively quieting everyone but a baa-ing sheep. Everyone turned to look at her, a few looking a little nervous. Astrid was awfully scary and sometimes that was useful. Gobber smiled at her. "Now explain the

problem. O_ne at a time_."

* * *

><p>Toothless swooped down and landed in a meadow. It was getting dark and while Toothless enjoyed flying through the night, Hiccup did not. He was a human and humans always slept at night. Toothless knew this.<p>

Hiccup used the fading sunlight to look at the map. They had flown quite far really. They hadn't seen any new dragons yet, but they had seen a large group of Nightmares the day before. Hiccup had spent a decent amount of time drawing them while Toothless socialized. He had even asked around about Irena's home. No one had ever even _heard_ of Sola, let alone seen the place. Half of his plan had failed already.

Toothless sniffed the air suddenly.

"What is it, bud?"

Toothless made a grumbly noise towards a large tree before heading over there. Hiccup followed, leaving his map open on the ground.

There was a surprised squeak when Toothless stuck his head around the trunk of the tree. The squeak was feminine.

"He won't hurt you." Hiccup promised whoever Toothless had startled.

Toothless bumped whoever it was with his snout until they emerged from the tree's other side. It was a brunette girl about Hiccup's age. She looked perplexed.

"Um, hello." Hiccup said pleasantly.

"...hi," replied the strange girl.

"Toothless didn't mean to scare you." Hiccup told her, scratching the dragon under his chin.

The girl still side-stepped away from Toothless, looking weary, but she introduced herself. "I'm Kristiana."

"I'm Hiccup."

She snickered. "What kind of a name is _that_?"

"It scares off trolls." he shrugged.

She smiled, clearly amused. "Well that's helpful."

"I'd say it is."

"What are you doing here?" she asked him.

"We're exploring." he motioned to the map behind him on the grass.

"Sounds fun,"

Hiccup shrugged. "I guess."

"Any particular reason why?"

"Why we're exploring? Not exactly. My mother and girlfriend insisted I needed a break."

Toothless nuzzled at Kristiana's hand. She seemed friendly. She didn't move her hand away, but her eyes were wide.

"He really won't hurt you. My four year old plays with him all the time."

Toothless gurgled in agreement and Kristiana opened her hand slowly. Toothless licked it.

"You have a four year old?" Kristiana asked Hiccup, slowly moving to rub Toothless' nose. The Night Fury purred happily. "I find it hard to believe you are married. You can't be any older than me." Kristiana looked about seventeen to Hiccup.

"I never said I was. I just said I _have _a four year old." Hiccup replied, folding his map back up.

Kristina moved her hand to Toothless' neck. "So you're telling me you knocked up some girl four years ago? I'm hoping it was your girlfriend."

"No." Hiccup put his map back in his armor. "She's adopted, thank you very much."

"No need to get testy," Kristiana's nose crinkled. "I don't know you, remember?"

Toothless turned away from his scratcher and came to Hiccup's side.

"Sorry, nobody has really asked me that before." Hiccup shrugged.

"That's okay." the brunette replied, swatting her hand through the air. She changed the subject. "Are you going to sleep here? In the middle of the forest?"

"Why not? I've got food. And a dragon." She hadn't asked about Toothless yet, oddly enough.

"Nope."

"What?"

"You're coming with me." she insisted. "My mother will come back from the dead if I don't make you come stay with us." Us?

"But you don't know me! I could be a serial killer!" People on Berk were warm and welcoming for the most part, but never like this! This was dangerous kindness! Toothless snorted. Serial killer? Yeah, right.

Kristiana seemed to have the same thought. "You hardly look like you could punch someone hard enough to actually cause pain. No offense."

Hiccup smiled a bit. "None taken."

"If you don't come with me, I will have to drag you."

Hiccup rolled his eyes. If this girl was Astrid, the moment he said he was fine where he was, Astrid would have left. "Fine," he sighed. "But I warn you now, I have to get up early so I can start heading home."

"That's fine." Kristiana replied. "Now follow me."

So he did. Toothless was immediately to his left. The pair followed Kristiana on a winding path out of the woods.

"Are you going to tell me where I am?" Hiccup asked the girl.

"Are you going to tell me where you're from?" she countered.

"Berk," Hiccup replied. "Your turn."

"Dreki,"

Eventually, they arrived at a house. It was of a decent size and looked to be two floors tall.

A small girl darted out of the house, she was probably six and her curly copper hair was cut to her shoulders. "Sissy! Nessa called me-!" The little girl stopped short when she saw Hiccup. "Who're you?"

"I'm Hiccup." Hiccup replied, putting his hand on Toothless' snout to keep him from investigating the tiny girl.

"That's a weird name."

"I know." he smiled. "What's your name?"

"Elida. Your dragon is cute."

Toothless let his tongue loll out of the side of his mouth to prove her point. Hiccup chuckled. "Thank you."

"Can I pet him?"

"Sure," Hiccup took his hand from Toothless' snout, allowing the dragon to sniff Elida.

"Sissy doesn't like dragons much. I do. They're pretty." Elida explained, rubbing Toothless' neck.

"Do you have a lot of dragons here?" Hiccup asked mostly Kristiana.

"No, they only come around once a year." Kristiana responded.

"Toothless sleeps in my room."

"Lucky," Elida breathed.

* * *

><p>Kristiana had six sisters. She was the oldest at nineteen, then Helga who was fifteen, Signy who was fourteen, Torid who was ten, Nessie who was eight, Elida who was five and finally baby Brenna, who was only ten months old. Their mother was dead, so Kristiana had stepped up to matron of the household and that required minding all the girls while her father was working.<p>

All the girls were in bed, though. Except for Kristiana.

She had explained to Hiccup that the girls had thought they'd heard a dragon's roar and she promised to investigate and left Helga in charge, which was how she found him and Toothless. All the girls had been head over heels for Toothless when they saw him.

"You're an only child, huh?" Kristiana asked him.

"Yeah, how'd you know?" Hiccup was shocked. Toothless was curled up next to him, fast asleep. He had missed playing with Irena and he had six girls to play with. He was exhausted.

"You looked overwhelmed with the seven of us all in one room." Kristiana smiled. "My mother always said that a house with less than three sets of running feet was a boring one. Sorry, I should've warned you."

"It's fine. I like kids."

"Are you going to have more?"

"I don't know." Hiccup shrugged, running his hand through his hair. "I'll let you know after the wedding."

"You lied to me." Kristiana announced.

"Huh?"

"You said you had a girlfriend, not that you were getting married!"

Hiccup shrugged. "Sorry? Habit."

Kristiana sighed dreamily. "I wish I could get married."

"Why can't you?"

"No, no! I can get married, just not the way I want. My mother is dead. She can't make my dress."

"...oh..." Yeah, her mother was dead. "How'd she... how'd she die?"

"She was older when Brenna was born. She didn't live long enough to see her."

"I'm so sorry." was all Hiccup could say.

"Don't be." Kristiana said quietly, looking down.

"I-I lost my dad a few months ago." Hiccup admitted equally as quietly.

"Not during childbirth, I assume."

Hiccup chuckled. "No."

"Wait a minute..." Kristiana looked up slowly. "Stoick the Vast... Berk.. you're... chief, aren't you?"

Hiccup shrugged. "I-yeah."

"Oh my gods," Kristiana shook her head. "I can't believe I didn't put that together before! The Night Fury, the map, the leg!" She stood up. "You're a legend! And I brought you into my house with six wild sisters." She collapsed back into her chair and buried her face in her hands. "I am so sorry."

"Seriously, don't be! I'm only a year older than you! I don't need to be treated special or anything! Trust me, Kristiana. I'm fine."

She didn't move.

"My girlfriend punches me really hard when I'm being an idiot." he said sheepishly, trying to make her feel better. "My daughter agrees. I am very much an idiot."

"What's her name?"

"Who's name? My girlfriend or my daughter?"

"Both, I guess." Kristiana looked up.

"My girlfriend's name is Astrid and our daughter's is Irena."

"Divine beauty and woman of peace. Do their names fit them?"

"I'd say so."

Kristiana smiled. "Lucky guy."

He grinned. "Very lucky."

"Well, I'm going to go to bed." Kristina stood up. "I don't know if you'll be here in the morning, so I guess this is goodbye." She held her hand out towards him. He took it.

"If you're ever around Berk, make sure to visit."

"We will." she promised. She pointed him to the spare bedroom. "My dad won't bother you and I doubt he'll care that you're here. Good night, Hiccup."

"Good night, Kristiana and thank you."

She smiled at him and went up the stairs to her room. Hiccup bent down. "Come on, Toothless." Toothless whined and stood up. He followed Hiccup into Kristiana's family's spare bedroom. Toothless curled up next to the bed. "We're heading home tomorrow, bud."

Toothless grumbled happily.

"Hopefully Irena's nightmares aren't too bad... I really miss them, Toothless."

Toothless pulled his ears to his head tightly and closed his eyes.

Hiccup chuckled. "Alright bud, let's go to bed."

* * *

><p>AN: Sorry this took so long! I'm back at school now and it was stressing me out for so long! This chapter was hard and didn't end up the way I wanted to, but I hope it's okay! One more chapter and then the next will be the wedding! YAY! Thank you guys so much for reading this probably crummy chapter and for being so patient! **_

**Please let me know what you thought in a review! **

13. Chapter 13

"The soul is healed by being with children. " -English Proverb

* * *

><p>It was late, but Astrid wasn't sleeping. Hiccup was supposed to be back soon after lunch, but there had been no sign of him. They were giving him until dawn and then were going to go looking for him. She was terribly worried, not that she'd ever admit it.<p>

She had taken Irena home the night before to see if it would help her nightmares (there wasn't much of a change) and she stayed there with her. She had sat with Irena until she fell asleep (and told her about how they got Hiccup's toy Nadder back when they were teenagers) and then went to wait in the main room with Valka. They didn't speak much. Their worry was hard to talk around, but Astrid tried.

"Ooh, when he gets home I'll feed him to Stor- did you hear that?" It was a whooshing noise.

Valka nodded. "It sounded like-"

"Easy, bud." came a muffled voice from outside.

Astrid marched to the door and flung it open as quietly as she could.

"Hey Astrid," Hiccup said, grinning. Toothless smiled at her as well.

She scowled and punched his arm hard. She was mad at him. "You were supposed to be home hours ago!" she chastised in a loud whisper.

He rubbed his arm. "Sorry, we got stuck in a storm. We somehow beat it here. It'll hit around dawn, maybe. And ow, Astrid, geez."

She tried to scowl at him, but it didn't work much longer. She couldn't stay upset with him if he was stuck in a storm. Her scowl dropped mostly against her will and Hiccup kissed her cheek. "Sorry for worrying you, Milady."

"Thank Odin you're alright, son." Valka said from behind Astrid. Toothless trotted into the house and crooned indigently. She chuckled and scratched the dragon. "And you too, Toothless."

Astrid pulled Hiccup into the house and shut the door.

"I have something for you," Hiccup told Astrid, pointing at her, and she smiled a bit. "But you can't have it yet."

"Why would you tell me then?" she threw her hands up in frustration.

He smirked. "Because you're cute when you're irritated."

She crossed her arms made a noise similar to a growl. Anyone in their right mind would have shut up then, but Hiccup was, well, Hiccup, and that on top of the fact that he did find her quite adorable when she was irritated meant he wasn't going to shut up.

"That's exactly what I mean." Hiccup laughed.

"What if I find it?" she raised an eyebrow. She was pretty good at finding things.

"Good luck with that." he replied, still smirking. "I promise you won't find it. I have something for Irena and you too, Mom."

"Me?" Valka was surprised.

"Yes, and you're all getting them on the same day. And no, I won't tell you anyone else's or give you any clues."

What could he possibly have for all three of them? Astrid was stumped.

"You'll get it soon enough." Hiccup promised. "Is Irena sleeping?"

"She was worrying herself sick, poor dear." Valka explained. She really was. Almost immediately after lunch, Irena had started rubbing her arm with the scar on it urgently and worriedly. She claimed she wasn't hungry at dinner and refused to eat anything. Astrid had, somehow, convinced her to eat a few bites.

"I said one o'clock, and if not, before midnight at least." he smiled apologetically. "Sorry."

"I'm just glad you're alright, you big dork." Astrid told him.

"I promised I'd come back in one piece and I did!"

"Yes. Thank you." Valka smiled. "Well, I guess I'll be going to bed then. Good night."

"Good night, Mom."

"Good night, Valka."

Toothless rubbed against her legs and she scratched smiled at the three of them and left.

"How's Irena been with her nightmares?" Hiccup asked Astrid.

"She's still got them. I was hoping they'd go away when you came home."

Oh no. He knew he shouldn't have left. She was still suffering with her nightmares and it was all his fault. "Are they all about the same thing?"

Astrid shrugged. "She won't tell me anymore. She just cries."

He sighed and walked towards her room, Toothless and Astrid following behind.

Irena was curled on her side, facing the door, her thumb in her mouth, Kaida and Lena hugged close to her with her free arm. Safira was sleeping on her pillow, but perked up when Hiccup opened the door.

"It's alright, Safira. Go back to sleep." Hiccup told the little dragon quietly. Safira trilled softly and lay her head back down, her eyes still trained intently on Hiccup.

"No..." Irena murmured suddenly, her face crumpling. Safira trilled, concerned. She whimpered and before Hiccup could cross the room to get to her, she squealed in her sleep and her breathing became heavy. "No! Daddy!" she cried out.

Hiccup sat next to her on the bed and put his hand lightly on her arm. "Irena? Irena, wake up." Toothless was next to the bed as well, just as concerned as his rider.

She cried out again and Hiccup looked over at Astrid hopelessly. Astrid sighed and joined Hiccup. The sight of Irena like this was just heartbreaking.

Astrid lightly shook the little girl. "Irena, please wake up."

Irena's sat up with a start, and, though her eyes were open, she cried out one last time.

"It's okay, little one." Hiccup told her gently from her side.

Irena looked over at him and blinked twice. "Daddy," she breathed, relieved, before wrapping her arms around his middle.

Hiccup hugged her close. "It's okay, Irena. You're okay. I'm here,

I've got you."

Irena curled closer to him, her breathing slowly returning to normal.

Astrid was smiling. Had Hiccup not noticed? Irena had just called him "Daddy" and he didn't react at all. Given, he was worried, but so was she and she noticed.

"Don't go." Irena begged rather pitifully.

"I won't." Hiccup promised sincerely, pulling her into his lap. "I won't, Irena."

When Irena finally calmed down, she looked up. Hiccup kissed her forehead.

"Are you okay now, little one?"

She nodded slowly.

He smiled. "Good. I missed you."

"I missed you too, Daddy." She looked shocked. She hadn't realized she had called him that. Maybe he didn't want her too. Her cheeks flushed faintly and she looked down. "I'm sorry."

"Sorry for what?"

"I called you 'Daddy'." Irena shifted uncomfortably. She wanted to call him that desperately. Her real father didn't deserve that title, Hiccup did. There was no contest there. Daddies don't have to be fathers and sometimes fathers aren't daddies.

He felt a little dumbstruck and happy. She called him 'Daddy'. That was new and he'd be lying if he said he didn't like it. She loved him that much. "You can call me that if you want to."

Irena looked back up at him, sapphire eyes wide. "I can?"

"Sure you can."

She smiled and so did Astrid, but Hiccup and Irena seemed to not have noticed her presence.

"Did you have fun on your adventure?" Irena asked Hiccup.

He nodded. "I did. I'll show you what I drew in the morning if you want."

"Yes please." She said eagerly.

Hiccup laughed. "I made a new friend too. She's got a little sister that's your age."

Irena smiled.

"She?" Astrid asked on accident. It was meant to be a thought. It came out pretty harsh too. Stupid mouth.

"Yes," Hiccup replied. "Her name is Kristiana and she has six little sisters. I think you'd like her, Astrid."

"Does she like dragons?" Irena asked excitedly, reaching over to scratch Safira.

"Her sisters do. She's not very fond of them, but she puts up with them. And I told her about you two and she says I'm very lucky." Hiccup kissed Astrid on the side of her head. "I must say I agree."

Astrid smiled. She wasn't jealous. No, she knew better than that. This girl was a friend, if that.

Irena yawned suddenly, losing energy as fast as any little girl can.

"Tired, little one?" Hiccup asked.

"Mhmm," Irena drooped against him, slipping her thumb into her mouth.

Hiccup adjusted the four year old in his arms and stood up. He knew she wasn't going to want to sleep alone. She curled against his shoulder contentedly.

Astrid stood up as well, thinking she should probably leave.

"Can you stay, Mommy?" Irena murmured against Hiccup's armor. If she could call Hiccup her daddy, she assumed she was allowed to call Astrid her mommy.

Mommy. That was a word Astrid never thought she'd hear anyone call her. It warmed her heart in a way she didn't think possible before Irena came into her life. Children really were wonderful things. Astrid and Hiccup exchanged quick a glance and it was settled.

* * *

><p>Moments later, Irena was snuggled in between Astrid and Hiccup, Lena and Kaida in her arms. Safira was curled up next to Toothless. The three of them were as close as physically possible without crushing Irena. It felt like family. It felt nice.<p>

"I missed you both so much, you know." Hiccup told them. Irena was half asleep, so all she could do was hum in agreement. Astrid smiled at Hiccup over Irena- their daughter's- head.

"We missed you." Astrid replied. Irena cuddled closer to Astrid, who was falling asleep. "You'll have to tell us all about it in the morning."

"I will," Hiccup assured. "Good night." He said to both of them.

"Good night," Astrid replied, shutting her eyes. Irena only mumbled. In no time at all both Astrid and Irena were sound asleep.

Hiccup pulled them both closer to him before he fell asleep as well.

There were no bad dreams or nightmares in the house that night, only happy ones filled with dragons and friends and family and weddings and laughter and love.

* * *

><p>AN: Guess who got a tablet with her birthday money and can manage documents from it! Gods, I love this thing. Anyway, I hope you liked the chapter! Irena finally called them Mommy and Daddy! Yay! Irena is such a cutie pie. :)**_

**Next chapter is Getting Visitors (a.k.a., the first of the three wedding chapters!)! I've already got quite quite a bit of it written, but it's no where near done! I'm aiming for an early update, maybe the weekend? If I can't do it, I'm sorry. School and stuff, you know how it goes.**

**I'll be honest, I have a rough outline for the rest of the story already. I'm not sure how long it'll take to get there, though. I really want a Snoggletog chapter, but Christmas is soooo far away. *sigh* Let's see how the plot changes on me before I promise anything.**

**I love hearing from you guys! When I have a crummy day, I go back and reread the reviews (they never fail to make me smile)!**

**Please review if you can! Tell me what made you smile/laugh out loud/snort/get teary/yell at the screen. Reviews help me with motivation and sometimes even ideas. They truly are appreciated!**

**Thanks for reading lovelies! See you soon!**

14. Getting Visitors (Wedding Part 1)

"There are big ships and small ships. But the best ship of all is friendship." -Unknown

* * *

><p>"Astrid!"<p>

Astrid turned around and smiled when she saw who was calling her.
"Merida!"

The redheaded nearly tackled her friend with a hug and when her extremely curly hair caught up with the rest of her, it smacked her around the shoulders.

"I've missed ya!" Merida exclaimed, pulling away. "When we got the letter, I told me mum and dad that I was coming no matter what! Come hell or high water and everything in between!"

"We missed you too," Astrid replied, smiling. "I think you were the first we thought to invite."

"It's been too long!" Merida continued. "I don't see ya for two years

and now you're getting married! Congratulations, by the way!"

Astrid laughed a little at the princess' excitement. "Thank you."

"Where is he?" Merida asked. He meaning Hiccup, of course.

"He's busy doing... something..." Astrid waved her hand dismissively. "I'm not sure what."

"Boys," Merida sighed.

"Boys." Astrid shrugged, rolling her eyes.

A little blonde was bounding down the hill and skidded to a nervous halt when she saw Merida, drawing the princess' attention. Astrid followed her friend's gaze and smiled a little.

"It's alright, little one. She's a friend." Astrid told Irena. Irena made her way slowly to Astrid's side. Astrid put her hand on Irena's back.

Merida looked to Astrid, a little confused, before crouching down to Irena's height. "And who's this sweet, wee lassie, hm?"

"Irena," Irena said quietly. She wasn't much for strangers.

"What a pretty name for a pretty girl." Merida said, making Irena smile. "I'm Merida. It's nice to meet you, Irena." Merida held her hand out to the little girl and Irena took it nervously. "I won't bite ya, lassie." Irena giggled and Merida smiled. "Aren't you cute."

"She's our daughter." Astrid said to her friend in explanation. Despite Astrid taking Hiccup's pencil to write on the invitation, they had both somehow forgotten to mention Irena until the boat was too far away for anyone to go after in any reasonable amount of time. Even someone aided by a dragon.

Merida looked up quickly, confusion written all over her face. No way. Irena was at least four and Merida had visited two years ago and the only way they could have a daughter was... oh. Yeah, adoption made sense. Irena might've had blonde hair and blue eyes, but besides that, she looked nothing like Astrid. And there was no hint of Hiccup anywhere at all. Merida shoved an unruly curl out of her face and looked back to Irena. "You must be very happy then."

Irena nodded and smiled. Of course she was happy! She was going to have a real family.

"I bet you have a pretty new dress to wear, don't ya?"

"Yeah! It's blue!"

Merida smiled. "Would you show me later?"

Irena nodded again.

"Alright," Merida stood up. She looked at Astrid. "So where's this boy of yours?"

Astrid shrugged. "He's around. We can find him."

"Who?" Irena asked.

"Hiccup," replied Astrid.

"He's by the Academy with his mommy." Irena replied.

"Okay,"

The group of three made their way to the Academy. Merida and Astrid chatted about things Irena didn't know about. Hiccup was casually leaning against the fence of the Academy, Toothless at his side, talking to his mother with his hands moving animatedly as usual.

"Look who I found!" Astrid said when they were still a bit away.

Hiccup, Toothless and Valka looked over at them and that was Merida's cue to bound over and hug Hiccup. By the time Astrid and Irena caught up, she was already talking about a mile a minute.

Toothless whimpered at Merida's side and she smiled at him. "I didn't forget about you, you big oaf!" She scratched at his neck and that was all it took for him to start licking her like mad (and for her to start laughing hysterically).

"Toothless!" Hiccup admonished. "Be nice to her! She's a princess!"

Irena's eyes widened. Merida was a princess? Wow.

Toothless backed off, grumbling. I missed her too!

Merida started flicking dragon spit off of herself, still laughing. "You're all so enthusiastic here."

Valka smiled.

"Mom, this is our friend Merida from Scotland. Merida, my mom." Hiccup introduced.

"I remember you." Valka told Merida, smiling. "You were just a babe, but that hair! How could you not remember that hair!"

Merida laughed and subconsciously ran her hand through her hair. She had heard of the time that Hiccup's family had come to Scotland for a meeting with hers. She was older than Hiccup and apparently he was sitting on the ground and not doing much at the time so she hit him over the head with a wooden horse and he cried. Not that either remembered, of course.

Astrid began. "Didn't you hit him over-?"

"-the head with a toy horse." Merida and Hiccup finished together. Stoick brought that story up every time Merida had visited. Hiccup rolled his eyes.

"Oh yes! I nearly forgot!" Valka laughed. "He cried for at least an hour after that and then pouted."

"Mooom," Hiccup whined, turning faintly red. Irena giggled.

"My parents say hello, by the way." Merida told Valka.

Valka nodded. "Tell them the same from me."

"Why didn't they come?" Hiccup asked, recovered from his embarrassment.

Merida rolled her eyes. "Someone's got ta watch my brothers."

"They're still causing trouble?" Astrid asked, bewildered.

"Only more." Merida grinned. "They're right troublemakers still."

Hiccup laughed. "Oh geez."

Irena was standing near to Astrid's side, listening. Obviously this princess with tumbling red curls was an old and dear friend of Astrid and Hiccup. She seemed nice enough, very friendly.

"Hiccup!" came a voice. Eret, son of Eret appeared. "There's another ship!"

"Another- another ship?" Hiccup stammered, the smile sliding off his face and he ran his hand nervously through his hair. The only visitor they were expecting today was Merida. They invited her a bit early because she was a friend.

"Who is it?" Astrid questioned Eret.

"I think I heard Arendelle, but I can't be sure."

Hiccup paled. "Arendelle? That's a kingdom! With real, actual, princesses!"

Merida crossed her arms and huffed, sending a few curls flying. "Excuse me."

Hiccup didn't seem to hear her and grabbed onto Astrid's arm. They had invited Arendelle out of respect, because they were trading partners and Stoick and Hiccup had been invited to their queen's coronation (although they couldn't come due to the fact that another chief was visiting Berk that week), but they had never written declining or accepting. Or at least, it had never reached Berk. He continued in a worried hiss. "Princesses. We aren't ready for princesses, Astrid!"

"What am I then, ye daft boy?" Merida demanded. "A dragon?"

Toothless snorted indignantly. Safira was busy playing with some other Terrors.

Hiccup stumbled a reply. "You're not a- I mean you are, but- not

like-" Merida glowered at him.

Astrid wrestled her arm out of his grasp and turned to Merida. "What he means is, you've been here before, they haven't."

Hiccup smiled at her in thanks.

"We're Vikings." Valka told them comfortingly. "There isn't much we could do to change the way this village looks and acts. They're here for a Viking wedding anyway."

"But we didn't know they were coming! And Merida usually stays with Astrid but what about them? I don't know what to do!"

"Even so, you can't just stand here bumbling like a buffoon, son!" Valka told Hiccup. "Go talk to them and have Merida come with you. She's a princess too, perhaps she can be of some kind of help."

And so they went. Merida made Hiccup and Astrid (and subsequently Irena, who was holding Astrid's hand) go first. She trailed behind them. Toothless was made to wait back at the Academy with Valka, for the princesses might not be as accepting of the Night Fury's warm welcome as Merida.

The boat was larger than any of Berk's. It looked somehow more majestic than any boat Hiccup had ever seen. The sail was a pure white with a swirling cursive purple-blue 'A' in the center. Irena gasped at the sight of it. It dwarfed Merida's ship as well, even though hers was half an hour away and hardly more than a blob in the ocean (Merida stayed with Astrid, there was no reason for the boat to stay). How they had missed this ship was a mystery. They must have come from a different direction.

"Never met 'em," said Merida quietly from behind, sounding vaguely amazed herself. "But Mum and Dad always said Arendelle makes quite the first impression."

There was some muttering and shuffling and suddenly a girl with red hair popped into sight. Her hair was less intensely red than Merida's wild, fiery curls, but more red than Hiccup's brownish-auburn. It was a nice color. Her hair fell in two neat braids to either side of her head. Her freckled cheeks flushed pink with embarrassment and she smiled a quick and nervous grin before ducking out of sight again.

She reappeared a moment later, looking more calm. This time, a slightly taller girl with platinum blonde (practically white) hair in a side braid was next to her. She had a very regal appearance, but she looked kind enough. They shared a very obvious family resemblance.

The blonde smiled at them and stepped off the ship with a confident walk and her sister stumbled once behind her before catching up. The redhead had a cheerful bounce in her step.

"That's some dress." Astrid muttered, looking at the blonde. It looked as if it was made from ice and the way it shimmered was stunning. The redhead had a much less sparkly, but still beautiful dress. It was ankle-length and a mint green with rosealing on the skirt.

"Hello," the blonde said pleasantly. "I hope it is not too much of a problem that we've arrived a bit early. The weather was better than expected."

"Uh, no. It's not a problem at all." Hiccup replied. "I'm glad you didn't have any trouble. Um, I'm Hiccup and this is Astrid and, uh, welcome to Berk."

Irena was peering nervously around Astrid's leg and the redheaded princess smiled at her.

"Thank you. It's lovely to meet you all. I'm Elsa and this is my sister, Anna." Elsa was the queen right?

"Hi," Anna said giving a little wave.

"And..." Elsa turned around, looking confused. "Rapunzel? Eugene? Where are you?"

The lost princess was here too? Hiccup looked panicked. Their response had never made it to him either! Dear Thor. Who exactly was in charge of letters?

Anna smiled and said reassuringly. "She's our cousin from Corona. And Eugene is her husband." They hadn't been invited to her wedding due to the fact that Rapunzel was still getting used to being a princess apparently, and her parents didn't want her to be overwhelmed.

"Sorry!" said a voice. "Eugene couldn't find his pants!"

Elsa looked horrified, Anna pressed a hand to her mouth to suppress a giggle, Astrid raised an eyebrow, Hiccup looked weirded out, Irena was confused, and Merida snorted.

"Blondie!" scolded a male voice. "You made it sound like I wasn't wearing anything!"

"Whoops. I mean his good pants! He had pants on already, I promise!" Rapunzel corrected. "We're coming out now!"

Out stepped a girl with extremely short dark brown hair and a rather simple lavender dress and a tiny lizard on her shoulder, followed by a man with almost black hair. They stood to Anna's right. Hopefully their boat would stay docked so they could sleep there.

"Hi!" chirped Rapunzel cheerfully. "I'm Rapunzel."

Her husband spoke up. "And I guess that makes me Eugene. Nice little place you got here."

"Uh, thanks." Hiccup said.

Astrid smiled at them. "If you didn't hear, I'm Astrid, that's Hiccup and the little girl behind me is Irena."

Hiccup caught sight of Merida out of the corner of his eye. "Oh, and this is our friend Merida."

"Hello," Merida said to the four new arrivals.

"It's so nice to meet you all!" Rapunzel smiled.

"I'll go out on a limb here and say it's you two who are getting married." Eugene said, nodding at Hiccup and Astrid.

"You'd be correct." Hiccup told him.

"Who are you, little one?" Anna asked Irena, who had dared to peer out from behind Astrid again.

Irena hid herself again and Astrid smiled a little. "She's our daughter."

The looks on the royal's faces only lasted a split second, but they were priceless. Hiccup opened his mouth to explain, but Astrid hit him with her arm and shook her head just barely at him. Merida smiled when she saw what Astrid did. She wouldn't tell either. This would be fun. Mean, perhaps, but entertaining none the less.

"What's your name then?" Rapunzel asked the four year old.

"Irena," the girl replied.

"Well, it's very nice to meet you Irena." Rapunzel replied.

Astrid put her hand on Irena's head lightly. She was still being shy.

* * *

><p>Some time later, after a bunch of questions and a tour and Queen Elsa making a very un-queenly little shriek at the sight of an excited Toothless barreling towards them (she was alright now), they had just gotten to talking. The political junk was out of the way.<p>

They all got along well. Eugene had a similar snarky sense of humor to Hiccup, so they got on almost scarily well. Anna and Rapunzel seemed to be cheerful around just about everyone. Elsa was considerably quieter than her family, but friendly.

Rapunzel and Anna were talking to Irena, asking her questions and making her smile, while Merida and Elsa were chatting with Astrid and Eugene was talking to Hiccup about dragons.

"What do like to do, Irena?" Anna asked.

"I like to read, 'specially the dragon book Daddy has. And I like to play with my dragon and Jakob and Colby. "

"Where is your dragon?" Rapunzel asked her. The little lizard on her shoulder was sitting at attention.

"She's playing with Zippy."

"What's her name?" Anna asked.

"Safira. What's your lizard's name?" Irena asked Rapunzel.

"Pascal. He's a chameleon. "

Irena scrunched up her nose. "A chameleon?"

"Yup, show her what you can do, Pascal."

Pascal nodded and bounced over to Toothless, who was watching him curiously. His scales darkened to black and Irena nearly fell over in excitement. Toothless looked startled. Pascal squeaked before crawling back up Rapunzel's arm and fading back to green.

"Wow," Irena breathed. "Neat! Can he breathe fire?"

Rapunzel laughed. "No,"

"If he could," Eugene piped up. "I'd have permanent third degree burns."

Pascal chuckled and Rapunzel rolled her eyes. Eugene went back to talking to Hiccup.

Elsa shook her head with a smile.

Merida laughed. "Pascal doesn't care much for Eugene?"

"Not really," Elsa replied. "He's very protective of Rapunzel."

"Sounds like Toothless with Hiccup." Astrid chimed in. "You don't mess with Hiccup if Toothless is around."

Suddenly from nearby, two someones shouted 'not it!'. Astrid, Merida, and Elsa looked over. Rapunzel was a good five feet away from Anna, who was about to tag Irena. The three of them were a mess of laughter. Pascal had rejoined Toothless, who was contentedly napping in the sun.

Irena darted out of Anna's reach just in time.

"You're good at this game!" Anna told Irena, who had circled back by Rapunzel. "You know who else is really good at Freeze Tag?" Anna looked to her sister mischievously.

"Anna," Elsa sighed.

"Come on! We haven't played tag in forever!" Anna protested.

"Alright," Elsa stood up, not looking at all upset. "Shall I be it?"

"Yes," Anna said, smiling.

Irena had somehow darted past them to Astrid. "Do you want to play, Mommy?"

"I don't see why not." Astrid smiled. She looked to Merida. "Up for a game of tag?"

"Sure," Merida stood up as Astrid did.

Irena bounced a little before skittering over to Hiccup. She grabbed his hand and pulled it a little. "Come play with us, Daddy."

"Yeah, Daddy. Come play." Astrid smirked at him.

"Who's it?" Hiccup asked, standing up. Irena smiled widely.

"Elsa is," Merida replied.

"Don't sit there like a lump, Eugene!" Rapunzel yelled.

"Alright, alright. I'll play too."

"Coming bud?" Hiccup asked Toothless.

Toothless cracked open a single reptilian eye and grumbled.

"I will take that as a no." Hiccup laughed.

"Everyone ready?" Anna asked.

Everyone nodded.

"Okay, everyone gets a five second head start."

Elsa gave everyone exactly five seconds to scatter. Naturally, she went after Anna first.

Anna veered out of the way.

"Anna! Slow down!"

"No!" Anna laughed.

A little snow flurry started right exactly over Elsa's head.

"Hang on, time out." Hiccup said, stopping everyone. "It's not cloudy. What exactly is going on here?"

"I'm so sorry!" Elsa cried, waving her hand and stopping the snow.

"What?" Astrid questioned. "How did you- I- what?"

"She has ice powers." Anna explained, coming to her visibly uncomfortable sister's side and squeezing her hand. "She knows how to control them, but when she gets excited or scared or determined, it snows. If you don't like them, we will be more than happy to leave."

Hiccup laughed. "Ice powers! Ice powers are strange, sure, but we ride dragons!"

"You're more than welcome to stay. A little snow doesn't bother us." Astrid told the sisters, smiling.

Elsa smiled.

"You can make it snow even when it's hot out?" Irena asked Elsa in awe.

"I sure can. That's why I'm so good at Freeze Tag." Elsa tapped Irena's arm, smiling. "You're the other 'it' now, by the way."

Irena giggled. She really liked these people, even though they called Flightmare Tag by the wrong name.

"There can't be two 'it's!" protested Eugene. "Who taught you how to play Freeze Tag, Snow Queen?"

"Oh please, Eugene, I practically invented this game."

Hiccup, Astrid, and Merida exchanged a look. Elsa didn't seem like the sassy type.

"It's more fun with two 'it's! It's harder!" chimed in Rapunzel.

"Whatever, two 'it's it is." Eugene replied.

"Time in!" Anna shouted before darting away from her sister. Elsa frowned before trying to get Eugene. Irena went after Hiccup.

"Hey, is there a rule against taking the freezer captive?" Hiccup asked anyone who was listening.

Merida shrugged. "Not one I'm aware of."

Hiccup smirked and turned around, scooping Irena up and holding her wrists together so she couldn't tag him.

"No fair, Daddy!" Irena told him, squirming to try to get away.

"Alright," Hiccup put her down a little reluctantly and she tagged him.

"Frozen!" she announced, before running off for Astrid, giggling.

"Oh no, you caught me!" Astrid's voice carried over to him along with Irena's giggles. Astrid looked over at him and smiled. He returned it

Never in a million years would Hiccup have ever guessed that he would be playing Freeze Tag at the age of twenty with four adult princesses, a prince consort, a little girl and Astrid about a week before his wedding.

He was having a surprising amount of fun, however. Hopefully the rest of his life would be filled with unexpected, fun little things like this. With Astrid and Irena (and Toothless) around, he was sure it would.

* * *

><p>AN: There's part one of the wedding, guys! The next part will be more wedding-y, I promise. Part Three will have the

actual wedding in it, just so you know. I'm working on wedding vows in my head as I type this (! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! !). The people I have spoken too, your characters will be included in the next two chapters! _**

To the guest(s) (I think there was two, maybe I'm wrong) that stayed up late to read this story: Wow, I'm flattered. I've done that before with really good fanfictions (one of which I can't find anymore). Like I said, I'm flattered, but your sleep is more important than my writing! It'll still be here when you wake up! Please, get to sleep on time guys! It's important! You need your sleep!

_I did get this up by the weekend (it's Sunday where I am)! I am proud of myself. _

_Thanks for reading everyone! Thank you all for your kind reviews! I'm so glad you like this! _

_Please review letting me know what you thought of this chapter if you can! _

_See you soon, friends! _

15. Getting Prepared (Wedding Part 2)

To the people that don't like that I added Anna, Merida, Elsa, Rapunzel, and Eugene: I am sorry you don't like it! Brave, Tangled, and Frozen are some of my favorite movies and the characters are awesome (I think, anyway). It'll be over soon. You can skip the wedding chapter if you want. But you're going to miss the a fabulous Eugene/Hiccup friendship moment and the best peg leg joke ever written in a fanfiction (maybe it's good. I think so, anyway). :)

* * *

><p>"A good friend is a connection to life -
a tie to the past, _****
>**_a road to the future, _****
>_**the key to sanity in a totally insane world**_**_
-_**Lois Wyse

* * *

><p>"So, how long have you and Hiccup been together?" Rapunzel asked Astrid. The girls (including Irena) were sprawled in various positions on a cliff overlooking the sea.<p>

"Do you want the real answer or the one my parents like?"

"Uh, real, I guess."

Astrid looked up from braiding Irena's hair. "Four and a half years."

"What's the one your parents like?" Merida asked.

"Four,"

"What's the six months from?" Anna asked.

"When he was being a wuss. He didn't actually ask me to be his girlfriend until his sixteenth birthday. We tell people we were together before that though. Unless my mom's around. She likes things to be very specific and my dad likes things to be proper."

"I don't think Eugene ever asked me that..." Rapunzel said quietly.

Anna nodded. "I don't think Kristoff asked me either. "

"Who's Kristoff?" Astrid asked her.

"My boyfriend."

"Why didn't he come?" Merida asked.

"He said he wouldn't be wanted." Anna rolled her eyes. "And that he'd be bored. He gets along so well with Eugene though, so I know he'd get along with Hiccup too."

"If you can't get along with Hiccup even a little bit, your head must be screwed on backwards." Merida proclaimed. "He's sweet."

There had certainly been a few people that hadn't gotten along with Hiccup, Astrid knew that. Dagur, Alvin (for a short time. He was coming to the wedding), and Drago came to mind. But she was certain the princesses and Irena did not want their good mood spoiled by deranged Dragon-nappers. Neither did she.

"If he was single, I might've tried to hook him up with Elsa." Anna admitted.

Elsa's eyes widened and she scooted farther from Astrid. "Why?"

Anna shrugged. "I don't know. He's kind of cute." Rapunzel nodded in agreement.

Merida and Astrid started laughing.

"What's so funny?" Anna asked.

"Daddy hates it when people call him cute." Irena explained before putting her thumb in her mouth.

"How come?" Rapunzel asked.

"He says he's too old to be cute." Astrid managed to say after pulling herself together. "I tell him he's cute just to bother him."

"So do I." Merida added, smirking at Astrid. Astrid shook her head and smiled.

"You two are like sisters." Rapunzel observed.

"I wish." Merida replied and Astrid nodded. "I've just got me three brothers at home."

It was quiet for a while before someone spoke again.

"Do you- do you mind if I try something with Irena's hair?" Elsa asked Astrid quietly. "I have something in mind that might look nice. I'd explain it, but I don't think I can..."

Astrid looked down at Irena, who nodded. She let go of the braided section of hair she had been doing and Irena scooted in front of Elsa like she had known her all her life.

Elsa was a little surprised, but she smiled. "Let me know if I hurt you, Irena."

"Okay," Irena replied.

Astrid smiled.

Merida nudged Astrid with her elbow. She looked mischievous. "Excited for next week?"

Astrid made a face and pushed Merida. "That's all my mom's been talking about."

"That's... concerning..."

Astrid rolled her eyes. "Tell me about it,"

Rapunzel and Anna exchanged a glance.

"What's next week?" Anna questioned.

Merida giggled. "Well, I don't think it's suited for little ears." The redhead looked at Irena, who was only paying attention to Elsa at the moment (Elsa was telling her a little story about braids).

Anna's eyes widened and Rapunzel turned faintly pink. Astrid shook her head. Merida, still grinning, snorted into her hand.

"Want some help, Elsa?" Anna asked suddenly.

Elsa shrugged, her hands holding separate parts of Irena's hair.

"We're helping anyway." Rapunzel announced, scooting next to Elsa. Anna sat in front of Irena and decided to teach her how to play some kind of hand clapping game.

Merida laughed and Astrid joined in.

These girls were hilarious.

* * *

><p>"You're not getting cold feet- er, foot- are you?" Eugene asked his new friend. Hiccup was sketching rather violently into his book. He and Toothless were sitting against a tree about as far away from the girls as he could get without leaving the island. Eugene had been looking for his wife and had stumbled upon Hiccup looked lost in thought.<p>

Hiccup looked up and scowled. "That was a terrible joke."

"Sorry, just trying to help out if you're having second thoughts. Astrid seems like the girl to hit first and ask questions later. Trust me, I know the type. She'd probably hit harder than Rapunzel though. I just want to keep you in one piece, is all. You're a decent guy."

"Thanks," Hiccup said sarcastically.

"Anytime," Eugene replied. "What's got you so down, anyway?"

"I don't know," Hiccup admitted. Sometimes it was easier to talk to a guy about guy things. "I love her and I do want to marry her, I'm just worried that I won't do it right."

"Do what right?"

Hiccup blinked. "I... uh... Everything?"

"You're over-thinking being married. It's not that hard. Just let whatever happens, happen. Don't be a jerk to her any more than you would usually be. Don't let her intimidate you too much, she is the same girl. It's nice to have someone to talk to about everything and know they aren't going to judge you for it. Or they pretend they don't anyway. Just remember this one thing."

"What?"

"Happy wife, happy life."

Hiccup smiled. "Sounds like good advice."

"It's very useful." Eugene replied. "I don't know why you're so freaked out. You already had a kid. You have a head start."

Hiccup sighed. "See, about that, Irena's adopted. Astrid wanted to see how long it'd take for you guys to figure it out."

"Makes a lot more sense now. You'd have to have been what? Sixteen?"

"I'm pretty sure I'd be dead if that was the case. Hit first, ask later."

Eugene chuckled. "Glad you aren't dead."

The young chief grinned. "Yeah, me too."

Toothless warbled in agreement.

* * *

><p>"Astrid!"<p>

"Hi Alisa."

A younger girl somewhat shorter than Astrid ran over for a hug. She had dirty blonde hair and brown eyes and there was a decent amount of

family resemblance between her and Astrid.

"Hi!" Alisa chirped pleasantly.

"How old are you now? Fifteen?"

The teenager shook her head. "Fourteen."

Astrid smiled a bit and shrugged. "I was close."

Alisa smiled.

"Hello Astrid!"

Astrid looked up. Sure enough, her older cousin (only by two years or so) was standing behind Alisa.

Astrid smiled. "It's nice to see you, Unn."

"You too," Unn hugged Astrid.

Unn and Alisa were sisters and the children of Astrid's father's brother. Astrid's uncle had moved to a different island because of a woman (who just so happened to be Alisa and Unn's mother). The brothers lived close enough so that their children knew each other but far enough so they only saw each other every so often.

Astrid was busy catching up with her cousins when she felt an arm slip around her waist. Hiccup.

"Hiccup, you remember my cousins, right? Unn and Alisa?"

Hiccup nodded. "I do."

Alisa and Unn glanced at each other. The last time they had seen Hiccup, he was seventeen, just a touch taller than Astrid, and a toothpick. He was still a toothpick, but not so noticeably, a decent amount taller than Astrid, and more adult-looking. Whatever had happened in three years had certainly done him well. It had also made their cousin a very lucky girl.

"What?" Astrid asked at their silence, glancing at Hiccup, who shrugged.

"Nothing," Alisa shook her head.

Unn changed the subject. "Mother has a gift for you, Astrid. But you can't have it yet."

"You'll get it next week." Alisa chimed in.

"No hints," Unn said, just as Astrid began to protest.

Astrid huffed and looked at her soon-to-be husband. "Now they sound like you!"

Hiccup still hadn't given her (or his mother or Irena) their gifts yet. He smirked and kissed her cheek. "Soon, Milady. Soon."

After Unn and Alisa had met the visiting royals (who all now knew

Irena was adopted) and reacquainted with Astrid's friends (including Stormfly, Toothless, and the Terrors) they had been introduced to Irena (and, subsequently, Safira) who clung to Astrid's skirt nervously.

And then dinner. The Great Hall was bustling and loud and throughout the next few days, the crowd and volume would only increase as more and more wedding guests came. Irena, who still hated loud things, was curled against Hiccup's side, sucking her thumb. Astrid had succeeded in trying to convince her to eat something.

Tuff was chatting up Unn, Ruff was gagging, Alisa had gone to sit with Ingrid and Ben (Irena would usually be sitting with Jakob and Colby, but she was having a bit of a rough time with the noise) Snotlout was trying (and miserably failing) to flirt with Elsa, who looked just amused as her sister and cousin, Merida, Eugene, Eret, and Fishlegs were talking about dragons and Astrid and Hiccup were just taking it all in.

Their family and friends were wonderful and they were thrilled that all these people were here to help them celebrate.

* * *

><p>AN: Next up, THE WEDDING! WOOOOOOOOOOHHOOOOOOOOO!
Wedding! *does happy dance and cranks up "Romantic
Flight"***_

_**Alisa and Unn, you know who you are! :) I hope I did you justice!
**_

****You don't know how many times I keep going to write "Ginny"
instead of Astrid. I'm not sure why, but I do. It's a legitimate
issue for me.**_**_

_**I'm sorry this one is so short. And lame. :/ It fought me hard.
Not to mention I had my first AP US test this morning and an AP
English essay due yesterday. I don't know why I decided taking all
honors classes was a good idea. Plus, I have two clubs to go to, one
to start, a dentist appointment tomorrow, and my mom's
sick.**_

_**On the upside, I got an AO3 account! The website's really neat and
super easy to use. Check it out. Crossovers are a breeze and you can
add all the characters and fandoms you want. It's in beta, so you
have to be invited by a member if you want to post stories. If any of
you are interested, I'd be more than happy to invite you. Shoot me a
PM!**_

_**I also got a BuildABear Toothless! (He's back online and in stores
now! No saddles yet though...) He is darling! I adore
him.**_

**Thank you all****soooooo**_** much for reading! I hit the 200
review milestone after I posted the last chapter and I squeaked in
the cafeteria! I'm so thrilled that so many people like this story!
I'd thank you all individually, but I'm kind of busy as of late!
Please consider this a big hug from me and a 'thank you' shouted
(quietly) in your ear! I love you all! **_

**This story ain't over yet, Dragons fans, so I hope you'll all stick around for the ride! I have so much (possibly fun) stuff planned!**

**Thank you all so much again! Please leave a review letting me know what you think!**

**See you soon! :)**

**Pink is out!**

16. Getting Married (Wedding Part 3)

Feel free to crank up "Romantic Flight" and put it on repeat starting now.

* * *

><p>"No scorching sun_

_nor freezing cold will stop me on my journey _

_if you will promise me your heart _

_and love me for eternity." _

~"For The Dancing and The Dreaming" from _How To Train Your Dragon 2_

"You are the star of my daydreams, everything you are is my reverie." ~"Daydreams" by Breanne Duren

"_This day I will marry my best friend,_

the one I laugh with,

live for,

dream with,

love."

~Unknown

"_You don't marry someone you live with- you marry the person you cannot live without" _~Unknown

"_The greatest achievement in my life thus far has been to love you and be loved by you."_ ~Unknown

"_You're nothing short of my everything."_ ~Ralph Block

"_You know you're in love when you can't fall asleep because reality is finally better than your dreams."_ ~Dr. Seuss

"_Once in a while,_

right in the middle of an ordinary life,

love gives us a fairy tale." ~Anonymous

* * *

><p>"Astrid, wake up! Today is a very important day!"<p>

Astrid opened her eyes, rolled over and sighed. Sure, she usually got up early, but not this early. Not even on a special day. Was today a special day?

"Astrid, I mean it!" Her mother called again from the main room of the house. "Up! Or I'll get the ice bucket. I am not kidding!"

Astrid sat up and brushed her hair away from her face. "Fine, I'm up." Her mother didn't often joke about using the ice bucket.

"Good."

Astrid rolled her eyes before the date hit her like a speeding overweight Gronkle. She was getting married today. Dear Odin above, she was getting married! To Hiccup. Today. She smiled.

Irena stirred next to her and blinked open her eyes. She rubbed them with her hand. Lena and Kaida were tucked into her arm. Safira had become fond of sleeping on Astrid's shelf for some inexplicable reason. "M-mommy?"

"Go back to sleep, little one. You don't have to get up yet." Astrid told her quietly, brushing a stray piece of Irena's hair off her face.

Irena shook her head and sat up anyway and Astrid kissed the top of her head.

"You just really want to put that dress on, don't you?"

Irena giggled quietly and leaned against Astrid. She really did want to wear her new dress. Astrid didn't really want to wear hers, though. It was long. And annoying.

"Mmph, "

Astrid and Irena both looked over the side of the bed to the princess sleeping on a pile of blankets on the floor. Each time she came, Merida insisted upon sleeping on the floor for some reason. This time was no different.

"It's too early to be giggling." Merida grumbled into her pillow.

Astrid dropped her pillow on the back of Merida's head, making Irena giggle. "Hey, somebody's getting married today."

"And that somebody isn't me." the redhead replied. "Can I go back to sleep?"

"No you cannot." Astrid replied, standing up. Irena slipped off too and she slipped her thumb into her mouth. "Get up,"

Merida rolled over so she was looking at Astrid. "Fine, I'll get up, ye bossy Viking."

Astrid shook her head. "Remind me why we're friends."

Merida sat up and grinned. "Because I'm charming."

"Sure," Astrid said sarcastically. "That's why."

Merida scowled.

"Are you girls coming to eat or not?" Astrid's mother demanded.

Irena looked expectantly at Astrid. She wasn't picky with food. Not at all. Even Astrid was pickier than she was. The only time she didn't eat was when she was very nervous or upset. That lead everyone close to her to believe that she hadn't been fed right by her parents.

"Go on," Astrid laughed.

Irena darted from the room.

Merida's stomach growled. She sheepishly looked at Astrid, who looked quite amused. "Perhaps we should eat too,"

"Sounds like a good idea."

* * *

><p>After breakfast, Anna, Rapunzel, and Elsa had taken up the invitation to come over. They had never seen a Viking wedding or anything one entailed, so they were very eager to see how it worked. Ruffnut, Unn, Alisa, and two of Astrid's aunts had also joined them. It was a good thing the Hofferson house was on the bigger side. And Astrid was glad her father had run off to catch up with her uncle.<p>

"Is there anything we should know about this wedding?" Elsa asked anyone who was paying attention. The adults had separated to one side, leaving the younger ones on their own for the time being.

Alisa put her hand over her mouth but a giggle still escaped. Unn smiled. Ruffnut looked mischievous, Merida laughed, and Astrid rolled her eyes, while the princess looked on, confused.

"What's so funny?" Rapunzel asked. Anna glanced around.

"They get locked up together." Ruffnut replied.

"_Alone,"_ Unn added, grinning.

"So _that's_ what you guys were talking about." Anna was horrified. "I knew it was something like that, but goodness."

Rapunzel looked incredibly uncomfortable. "For how long?"

"_Well_," Ruffnut singsonged. "It's _supposed_ to be a month, but-

"A _month_?" Elsa's eyes were wide.

"It's supposed to be, but they are rather important, so a week." Merida replied. "I'm staying here with Irena."

Irena looked up from scratching Safira. She didn't understand why they had to be locked away from everyone for a week. No one would give her a straight answer, either. She figured it was a secret, grown-up thing. She'd know eventually. Probably.

Astrid made a face. "Can we not talk about this before my mother drags me off? Do you know what they're going to tell me about?"

"_Every_thing." Unn smiled impishly. She wasn't married, but she knew what the day of a marriage entailed for a bride-to-be.

"Oooh, can I come?" Ruff asked.

Astrid was about to tell her no, when Ramona popped up behind Astrid. "If you'd like to, dear."

"Mooom," Astrid complained. "No,"

"Well, I'm sure she'll hear it one day. She may as well be prepared. Unn too."

"_Please_ tell me Valka isn't going to be involved in this conversation." Astrid wanted as few people as possible to witness her mortification. The facts of life didn't bother her, it was just the fact that her mother would be telling her everything she could happily live her life without knowing. Having Hiccup's mom there would definitely make it worse.

"I asked her. She refused."

"Oh thank Thor," Astrid breathed.

"Hear what?" Irena asked curiously.

"Grown-up stuff," Alisa told the little girl. "You'll learn about it when you're a big girl. Trust me, it isn't that exciting."

Irena nodded. Grown-up stuff was weird. She believed Alisa.

Within a few minutes, Astrid was being dragged out the door by her mother and two aunts (one of which had dragged Unn along), and being pushed by Ruffnut.

"Oh my," Elsa commented.

"I'm so glad that didn't happen to me." Rapunzel sighed.

"Don't get any ideas, Elsa." Anna told her sister.

"Well now," Merida stood up. "Should we work on getting ready?"

Everyone shrugged.

"I know Irena's eager to put on her new dress and show it off."

Irena smiled.

* * *

><p>It was getting close to the wedding. Astrid was back from being scrubbed and dressed. Her mother was combing her hair in that painful way mothers somehow always manage to do.<p>

Irena was dressed too, in a soft blue dress that fell just past her little knees with a carefully made ruffle around the bottom. She had fallen in love with the way Elsa braided her hair a few days before, so she had asked her to do it again. A thin braid started at her temple on either side of her head. They met at the back of her head and the rest of the hair blended in with the rest.

Rapunzel had found a white flower and slipped it in Irena's hair where the braids met. "I put flowers in my hair when it was long." she explained.

"It was long?" Irena asked, surprised that the short-haired princess once had long hair.

Rapunzel nodded. "Very long. It was blonde too. And it lit up when I sang."

Irena scrunched up her nose.

"It's true. It healed things, as well."

Irena shook her head. No way.

"Elsa has snow powers." Rapunzel said as if it explained everything.

That's true. And Irena had seen them. And Berk did have dragons... "Neat," Irena said, smiling. She decided to believe her. Rapunzel smiled back.

Elsa, Anna, Rapunzel, and Merida were certainly dressed like princesses. Their dresses were long and beautiful. Ruffnut and Alisa and Unn looked really pretty too. But, in Irena's opinion, no one looked more beautiful than her mother.

* * *

><p>Irena was putting Safira into one of Lena's dresses when she heard her grandmother's voice.<p>

Safira humphed and trotted off and Irena skittered into the main room where Grandma Valka was talking to her mother, who was smiling nervously and blushing in a way Irena had never seen while Grandma Ramona was smiling proudly (and was rather teary).

Everyone smiled at the little girl.

"Don't you look sweet," Valka said to Irena. Irena smiled. "Will you come with me for a minute?"

Irena looked to Astrid.

"Go on," Astrid urged.

Irena took her grandmother's hand and they went to Hiccup's house.

He was pacing nervously when they opened the door. Toothless was flicking his tail.

"Hiccup, calm down." Valka said gently. "You'll worry yourself sick, son."

"Sorry," Hiccup stopped pacing and ran his hand through his hair. Toothless gurgled.

Valka shook her head a little. "No wonder your hair never lies flat."

Irena giggled.

"Irena? Is that you?" Hiccup asked, crouching down, smiling. "I hardly recognize you! You look so grown up! I bet you're prettier than everyone. Even the princesses."

Irena smiled shyly. Did she really look that nice?

"I have something for you, little one." Hiccup grabbed something out of his pocket. It was still hidden in his hand. "When Toothless and I were exploring, we came across an island that had a lot of jewels on it and I saw one and thought of you." He took her hand and buckled a bracelet around her wrist. It was beautiful. It was leather with a metal plate on it that had flowers and her name engraved on it. In the center, there was a small, but beautiful, blue sparkly, gemstone. "I made this for you when we got home. To thank you."

"Thank me for what?" Irena asked, admiring the bracelet with both her eyes and fingers.

"For convincing me that I better ask Astrid to marry me. And for making me a better person just by being you." he smiled. "Do you like it?"

Irena nodded and hugged him tightly. "It's _really, __really _pretty. Thank you, Daddy."

Hiccup hugged her back. "You're welcome, little one."

"I love you." Irena murmured into his shoulder.

"I love you too."

"Hiccup," Valka said gently. "It's time."

"Oh gods," he sighed. He kissed Irena's forehead and stood up. "This is really happening."

Irena smiled. She caught a glimpse of a glittering something on a necklace Valka was wearing. She never wore a necklace before.

"It's really happening." Valka replied.

Irena reached up and took her daddy's hand. She was really going to have a mommy.

* * *

><p>Astrid's hair was down and loose. It was wavy from being taken out of her braid. It cascaded past her shoulders in a soft, shimmering sheet of pure sunshine. Her dress was floor length and a deep red, making her blue eyes brighter than usual. She was absolutely gorgeous.<p>

Hiccup was not ashamed to admit that he was misty-eyed.

This was really happening. Really, truly happening. They were getting married! Right now. And he couldn't think of anything else but her. Only Astrid existed. Only she mattered. And gods, he was really close to crying. He wasn't going to cry though. He wasn't.

Their hands were clasped together as Gobber (because Hiccup couldn't marry himself. That'd be really odd. Irena had fallen into a fit of giggles when he brought that option up a few weeks back. Becuase she thought it was so funny, he put on a really terrible accent and pretended to hold a wedding, much to Astrid's amusement) said the traditional things said at weddings. Promises of love and forever and being a perfect match. She was amazing and beautiful and smart and funny and stong-willed and perfect. And there was no one in this world he'd rather spend the rest of his life with.

Astrid couldn't stop smiling. She had been waiting for years for this moment. And it was finally here. And gods, was she going to cry? She didn't want to cry. But Hiccup was amazing and kind and fun and a great leader and intelligent and loving and perfect. She was so happy she was going to to spend the rest of her life with him.

Vows. Oh gods, vows. Astrid was to go first.

She took a deep breath. "Listen, you dork. I really didn't want to get all sappy, but I guess I have to. You're the most amazing person I have ever met. You don't see it, and you never have, but you are wonderful in every way. You are smart and funny and sweet and brave and you have a way with people I will never understand. People love you. And you love everyone. And I am so lucky that I'm one of those people. You'll never here me say this again, so make sure you remember it- you give me butterflies. You always have and you always will and I love that. I love everything about you. Everything. And I love you, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III. You and your sarcasm and your attitude and your ridiculous dragon. And I love that marrying you gets me the most perfect daughter I could ever ask gods, Hiccup, stop crying. Because then- then-" Astrid sniffled. "You're going to make me cry. You're lucky I love you, you dweeb, because I'd never cry for anyone else."

Everyone watching chuckled.

"Astrid," Hiccup began. "You are perfect. And I have no idea why you chose me of all people. Odin knows I don't deserve you. But you love me. And that makes me an extremely lucky guy. I am so lucky because you are amazing and beautiful and you know exactly what to do with everything. All the time. And I've been in love with you since we were kids, and I know it's cliché, but I fall more in love with you every single day. And I'm not even sure how that's possible because I've loved you for so long. You'd think I'd be sick of you by this point. But I do find something else to love about you every day. Whether it be how you smile when you're right or how- don't punch me- gentle you are when the situation calls for it. I still don't know why you chose me of all people. But I'm so glad you did. Because not only do _I _get to see you every day for the rest of my life, but so does Irena. And... I don't know what else to say but that I love you. _So much_."

And then it came time for rings. Hiccup nervously took Astrid's out of his pocket. He had spent forever on it, to make it perfect. He had found a red gem on the island where he found the blue one for Irena (and a clear one for his mother that he had made a necklace for) and Toothless and Stormfly had let him use some of their scales. The scales were alternated around the ring and the center had the red stone.

And Astrid fell in love with it the moment she saw it.

"Well, are ya gonna kiss or jus' stand there all day ooglin'?" Gobber demanded after the formalities were over.

Well, that was all he had to say.

Toothless and Stormfly, who were on either side of their riders, chirped happily.

Irena squeezed her eyes shut. As happy as she was, she could live happily without seeing kissing.

Elsa, Anna, Merida, Eugene, and Rapunzel applauded. The other wedding guests were a little more excited and enthusiastic.

Before anyone knew what was happening, it was time for the fun part. The party.

* * *

><p>Hiccup wasn't known for his dancing skills. He had never, ever, been good at it. He didn't have any rhythm whatsoever. That didn't mean he didn't like doing it, though.<p>

Astrid was quite the opposite. She was decent at dancing, but she despised it. Well, she didn't exactly _despise_ it, but it certainly wasn't her favorite thing to do.

So, the two of them dancing together was quite the sight to see.

Astrid didn't really mind dancing with him. He was happy so she was happy. He spun her in a circle, she laughed. She kissed his cheek. He smiled.

It wasn't long before Hiccup was dancing with his mother and Astrid with her father. And then, where people would have usually shoved the bride to her new father-in-law, there was a moment of awkward, heavy silence. And then Gobber showed up. And, everything went back to how it should be- happy, even though Stoick wasn't there.

Hiccup looked to Astrid's mother.

Ramona shook her head. "I'm sorry dear, I don't dance."

"Why not?"

"I'm afraid I have two left feet."

Hiccup grinned. "Well, I happen not to have any left feet. We're even!"

There was no way she could argue with that logic.

Astrid was just about ready to stop dancing, when the music started that signified that horrible partner-switching dance that everyone else loved.

Merida had claimed Irena as her partner, Anna and Elsa were together, Unn and Alisa were partners, and Rapunzel and Eugene obviously. Heather, who had come late due to a rough ocean, stood awkwardly in the back.

The highlight of the worst dance ever was by far when Eugene passed Anna to Merida and Hiccup passed Astrid to Tuffnut and somehow they got stuck as partners.

"Well, this was unexpected." Eugene said, taking two steps backwards.

"I, yeah." Hiccup replied.

"Well, I suppose if we stand still people are going to run us over, so..." Eugene shrugged. "Shall we?"

"I, uh, I guess we shall."

And so the Prince Consort of Corona and the Chief of Berk danced.

Astrid started laughing so hard, she had to sit down.

* * *

><p>Irena was falling asleep in Hiccup's arms.<p>

It was a long day full of laughter and fun and love for everyone, but especially a four and a half year old. Even the dragons were beat. Stormfly, Toothless, and Safira were all curled together by the fire.

"Long day, huh, little one?" Astrid asked. Irena nodded and her thumb found its way into her mouth. Astrid was tired too. It didn't help that the newly-married couple was slowly spinning in a circle. Astrid realized why babies round being rocked so relaxing.

It was official now, they were a family. Hiccup, Astrid, Irena, Valka, Ramona, Axel (Astrid's dad), Gobber, Stormfly, Toothless, Cloudjumper, Sharpshot, Zippy, and Safira. What a crazy, mashed-up, wonderful family.

"Sorry for interrupting you,"

Astrid and Hiccup looked over to see their new friends standing there.

Elsa smiled softly. "We've come to say good-bye. We're leaving in the morning."

"Are you sure you can't stay for the Dragon Races?" Hiccup asked.

"No," Elsa frowned a little. "I'm sorry. There are things we need to get back to. We'd love to, though, really. Perhaps next time."

"Definitely next time." Hiccup promised.

"Maybe we'll teach you guys to ride dragons next time." Astrid smiled.

Elsa looked weary, but the other three looked excited.

"You'll have to come visit us some time too!" Anna chirped excitedly. "Olaf and Sven would love you guys! And Kristoff too!"

"We'd love to,"

And there was hugging and handshakes and congratulations and then they were gone with promises to keep in touch.

Merida slipped in and took a sleeping Irena out of their hands. And Hiccup and Astrid were alone, but not completely.

"How long did this take you?" Astrid asked, meaning the ring.

"Weeks," Hiccup admitted. "Do you really like it?"

"I love it, but you didn't have to work so hard on something for me."

"Of course I did. You deserve it."

Astrid tightened her grip on him and looked up into his eyes. "I really, really love you."

"I love you too," he replied, leaning down to kiss her firmly on the lips.

They were together now, forever, and nothing and no one could tear them apart. Ever.

* * *

><p>AN: Oh dear, that was hard! Wedding vows for these two was so difficult. But, it's finally over and I know it was jumpy and not very descriptive (please keep in mind that I've been to 3 weddings that were so long, I was nearly bored to tears and one where I was a bridesmaid and my knee almost gave out on me (I got stitches to hold my tendon together years ago and it's never been right since) and I've never even been remotely close to being in love), but I still like it and I hope you guys do too! I am very sorry if I disappointed you, however.**_

**Now it's one week locked in a house for our favorite Viking couple *wriggles eyebrows*. I'm not writing any of it.**

**Next chapter, a surprise part four because you're all awesome! Dragon Racing! :) **

**I have a basic plot outline for the rest of the story and I'm sorry to say that there probably won't be a Snoggletog chapter, but I hope you're all ready for some fun. There will be some more family fluff in the coming chapters. **

**As always, thanks so much for reading! I love you all! Please leave a review if you can!**

**Pink is out!**

17. Dragon Racing

**In case you forgot how the wedding vows went last chapter...* (Rated T!):**

**Astrid: I promise that when your dragon gets sick, mine will make sweet love to it.**

**Hiccup: I promise that when you get old and I get old and our dragons get old, I will still bang you against the shower wall.**

* * *

><p>"The cat is domestic only as far as suits its own ends."_** ~Saki**_

* * *

><p>Irena was sitting next to Merida, swinging her legs. Her mommy and daddy were coming out of their house today!<p>

It took long enough. She still didn't know what they were supposed to do in there all alone for a week. Sure, she knew they liked each other a lot, but being alone must get boring, right? Toothless had slept in Astrid's room with Merida and Irena for the week and he whined nonstop because the only two people that could fly him were locked up.

Irena had missed them very much. Also, today was Dragon Racing day. And Mommy and Daddy were racing Toothless and Stormfly. And she was very excited to see it. She didn't know what it was really, but everyone else talking about it made it sound very exciting. Second-hand excitement is the next best thing to the real

thing.

Irena looked over at the doors of the Great Hall every time they opened to see if she could find her parents and she had been unlucky so far.

The doors creaked open again and Irena looked over, expecting to be once again disappointed.

But she wasn't.

"Mommy! Daddy!" Irena shouted, getting up and running towards them. She didn't even hesitate to call them 'Mommy' and 'Daddy' anymore. They were her mommy and daddy now.

Astrid caught her and picked her up before she collided with their legs. "Good morning, little one!"

"I missed you!" Irena exclaimed, wrapping her arms around Astrid's neck and looking up at Hiccup.

"We missed you too," Hiccup promised, ruffling her hair.

Irena smiled.

"Do you know what today is?" Astrid questioned the little girl as they walked to the table where Merida and their friends were sitting.

"Dragon Racing!" Irena said happily.

Astrid sat down and shifted Irena so she was sitting on her lap. "That's exactly right. And Stormfly and I are going to _win_."

"Don't get too cocky, Milady." Hiccup smiled. "I happen to have the fastest dragon."

"You _happen_ to have an ego the size of the ocean."

Hiccup chuckled and kissed her cheek.

Astrid rolled her eyes, but smiled.

"So, how'd _things go_?" Ruffnut asked. Merida covered her mouth to hide her sniggering.

"Ruff," Astrid scolded, turning a barely noticeable shade of pink.

Hiccup waved his hand and changed the subject quickly, much to the twins' dismay. "What'd we miss?"

"All the hot girls left." Tuffnut replied. "Except for Astrid's cousin. But that's just weird."

"Heather's here," Snotlout replied. "She's still pretty okay looking, I guess."

"But she's dating someone." Fishlegs chimed in. She was, they didn't

know who (someone from her home island that refused to come with her), but it had been mentioned in passing conversation.

"Wait," Astrid interrupted. "When did Heather show up?"

"She came in just as the wedding started. Rough seas," Fishlegs explained. "She says she didn't want to interrupt you. Because you were, um, busy."

"Where is she now?"

Everyone pointed in the same general direction.

"I'm sorry, Irena, I have to go drag someone over here."

Hiccup pulled the little girl into his lap and Astrid went to go find their friend. Irena started to tell Hiccup a story about something that had happened to her in the past week.

Astrid came back five minutes later with a brunette in tow.

"Hi," Heather said in greeting, mostly to Hiccup.

"Hey, long time no see." Hiccup replied. "It's nice to see you."

"You too," Heather smiled. "Congratulations, by the way! Both of you."

"Thanks," Hiccup and Astrid said together.

"I assume you've met everyone." Astrid added.

Heather nodded. "Everyone new. Eret, Merida, your cousins, Hiccup's mom and Irena. I'm excited to see you guys race today. Last time I was here, there was no such thing as Dragon Racing."

"Hiccup's going to let Astrid win," Ruffnut jumped in.

Hiccup looked scandalized. "Am not! I am going to beat all of you. I'm not losing on purpose! Are you kidding me? I've already won for her!"

Snotlout raised his eyebrow. "Let me get this straight: you've only been married a week and you already have a death wish? You do realize you married Astrid, right?"

Everyone laughed. Irena too. She knew Astrid could get angry. And violent. She had heard stories.

"No one needs to let me win." Astrid scowled, crossing her arms. "I can win without help."

Hiccup smiled sweetly at her. "Of course you can, Milady."

"One hour 'til race time!" Gobber announced loudly.

Cheers went up all around and many people got up.

"Well, we better go get ready." Hiccup looked down at Irena. "Do you

want to go with Merida?"

Irena nodded.

Merida stood up and Hiccup put Irena on the ground. Heather and Merida got on well, so they would be sitting together.

"I'm going to win, Irena. Keep that in mind." Astrid told Irena as she stood up. "Don't listen to him, he's delusional."

"Okay," Irena giggled. She took Merida's hand and they left with Heather to find a good place to sit.

"Astrid's going to kick his butt." Heather said quietly. She knew that Toothless was the faster dragon, but he couldn't-and didn't really want to- fly on his own, so he had gone a week without practice.

"I know," Merida replied with a shrug.

* * *

><p>All the racers were lined up on the starting line. Eret was a racer now too, he was actually pretty good and Skullcrusher was really quite fast despite his size. The Rumblehorn's size was kind of a problem though. Tight turns and shortcuts through small spaces were difficult with a big-bodied dragon.<p>

"Racers ready?" Gobber yelled.

Everyone nodded eagerly. The dragons roared in anticipation. Toothless bounced and nuzzled Hiccup excitedly.

"Mount yer dragons! On yer marks, get set-!" Gobber blew into the horn and everyone was off.

Irena was startled by the sudden wing flaps and the speed at which everyone took off.

"It's okay," Merida laughed, rubbing her arm. "It's okay."

After that, Irena was fine. She was watching the racers with rapt attention, her thumb in her mouth. The sheep part was really fun to watch. Especially because they could steal from other people. And Astrid was particularly good at that. She had even stolen one from Hiccup and dropped it in her basket before he even realized it was gone.

Needless to say, she gave him a smug smile. And he adjusted Toothless' tail flap with a scowl.

Astrid and Hiccup were tied at the moment, with Snotlout in a trailing second place, followed closely by the twins and Fishlegs. Eret was last because he was new and his dragon was ginormous. He was still having fun though.

The horn trumpeted again.

Irena heard several people cheer "The Black Sheep!"

Hiccup leaned forward, adjusted Toothless' tail again and sped up. Astrid urged Stormfly ahead. The twins had gotten ahead of Snotlout and were closing in behind the newlyweds, ready to snatch the sheep from their hands. Fishlegs and Eret had also gotten ahead of Snotlout because Hookfang had gone the wrong way, much to his rider's dismay.

It was anyone's game.

A black sheep was shot up into the air.

And Toothless caught it.

Hiccup patted his dragon enthusiastically. "Nice job, bud! Good catch!"

Toothless crooned. They hadn't won yet.

"Nice catch, chief." Astrid teased, coming up beside them, smiling smugly. "Too bad you aren't going to keep it."

"I'm not giving it to you." Hiccup smirked. "I don't care how much I love you."

"I never said I was going to get it."

"What-?"

Toothless growled and went limp for just a second.

"Haha!" yelled Ruffnut from below them. She was holding the black sheep triumphantly. She had just barely touched the happy paralysis spot on the Night Fury's neck while Astrid was distracting Hiccup. "Guess who's gonna win now!"

"She means us, by the way." Tuffnut added to clarify.

Snotlout and Fishlegs wouldn't steal it from Ruff, they were still in love with her. Eret couldn't make it up there. Only Astrid or Hiccup could try and get it back.

Astrid and Hiccup had an entire strategical conversation with their eyes, head nods and vague gestures in thirty seconds. Toothless was going to fly in close under the twins, Astrid was going to go over top, reach down and grab the sheep while they were distracted.

It meant she was going to win, but that was okay. At least the twins wouldn't.

Toothless swooped in low.

"Hey guys," Hiccup said nonchalantly (which was funny to Irena, because how could you be casual on a speeding dragon?), leaning back like he was lounging. "Fancy seeing you here."

"Stop distracting us." Tuff demanded.

"Cheater. We aren't going to give you the- hey!" Ruffnut moved the sheep just out of Astrid's reach (Astrid was visibly irritated). Unfortunately for everyone, the sheep was top heavy and it fell,

bleating pitifully and flailing, towards the ground.

But it landed right in the arms of a someone on a large, greenish dragon.

Eret.

"Come on, Skullcrusher." Eret urged, and the dragon sped up some and made it right over the baskets. Eret dropped it in his.

And the crowd went absolutely crazy.

Eret was beyond pleased. He had won his very first race! He landed.

Skullcrusher roared triumphantly and bopped Eret in the arm with his snout.

"Nice comeback," Astrid told him sincerely, hopping off Stormfly and scratching the Nadder's neck. "Didn't know you were down there. Good idea."

"Good thing I was, or the poor creature would've plummeted to the ground."

Astrid looked a little horrified by the thought. "That could've been bad."

"And graphic," Hiccup added as Toothless swooped in next to them. "Sheep don't look too great inside-out."

"No, they do not." Fishlegs agreed.

"I think a sheep would look pretty cool inside-out." Tuff announced.

"Can you do that? Would the sheep have to be dead?" Ruff questioned.

"Hm," Tuffnut was stumped. "I don't know. I guess we cou-"

Hiccup closed his eyes and put his hand up. "Do not try to turn any sheep inside-out, guys. Please."

"Aw man," Tuff grumbled.

"Come on, Hiccup, you take the fun out of everything." Snotlout only half-joked. Hiccup wasn't actually all that bad of a guy. Plus, they were cousins and friends now, so he was allowed to be a little mean without really meaning it.

"Yeah!" Ruff nodded.

"Okay, Snotlout," Hiccup smiled. "You can clean up the pieces."

Snotlout scratched the back of his neck. "On second thought, no inside-out sheep. Got it."

"Yes, please keep the insides inside." Fishlegs looked a little

green.

"You people have the oddest conversations." Eret proclaimed, shaking his head. "I don't think I'll ever get used to it."

Astrid turned to him. "I've lived here all my life and I'm still not used to it."

* * *

><p>The paint had been washed off of racers and dragons, but the festive mood lingered. It was the last real day of the wedding celebration, after all.<p>

"Astrid!" Alisa shouted, bouncing over, catching the attention of both Hiccup and Astrid. "Mother says we can give you the present now."

Astrid had almost forgot about it. "Okay, what is it?"

"Mommy," Irena protested from next to her, she had made her way to them through the crowd. Thankfully Toothless was big and Stormfly was obviously patterned. "You can't ask what it is!"

"Fine then, I won't ask." Astrid smiled at the little girl. Irena smiled back.

"Unn went to get it. She'll be here in a second."

"I'm here!" Unn said, jogging over. She was holding a blanket in her arms. "Here's your present." she panted.

Alisa pulled a small, fluffy Tortoise Shell kitten with a tiny pink nose out of the blanket.

"A kitty!" Irena explained happily, pressing her hands together.

"We were worried dragons might eat cats at first, but your mom said probably not." Unn explained. "She said it's been a while since brides were given kittens as presents here and that there weren't really any that are pets, but we have three and one of them had a litter two months ago, so, now you get kitten! This one's female."

Alisa held the tiny fluff ball out to Astrid, who took it. Her mother had a cat when she was very young, but it ran away when she was five and they never saw it again. She had really liked the little creature too.

It mewed at her, copper eyes innocent.

"She's cute," Irena gushed, standing on her tiptoes to see the animal better. Irena really liked kitties, she had one that was a regular visitor on Sola that was a gray tabby. She named it Lille.

Astrid crouched down so Irena could see it better and stroked the tiny cat right behind her ears. It began to purr and Astrid smiled.

"She is really cute." Astrid said. Irena rubbed the little cat under

its chin, only increasing the purring.

It was obvious they were in love with the little kitten. Hiccup, on the other hand, was not a big fan of little animals with fur. He never really liked them. He preferred taloned and scaled creatures. Little fluffy things were rather irritating to him. Astrid knew that, but he had a sneaking suspicion that the kitten was coming home with them anyway.

"Thank you," Astrid said to her cousins. "She's adorable."

Unn smiled back "You're welcome,"

"We have to go pack now," Alisa said sadly. "We're leaving in the morning."

"Enjoy your kitten." Unn added, before they (begrudgingly) went to go pack.

The little kitten had snuggled happily against Astrid, purring contentedly. Irena was still petting it and so was Astrid.

"What do we need a cat for, exactly?" Hiccup asked almost tiredly.

"Mice?" Astrid supplied, looking up at him, as if it answered every question in the world.

"We don't have mice. Safira and Toothless have that covered."

Irena looked horrified. "Safira doesn't eat mice! Only fish!"

Actually, Safira did eat mice occasionally. Apparently Irena never knew that (Toothless would have one sometimes too, only if it was really bugging him. Mice weren't very filling to a big dragon like him. It was like a person eating exactly one peanut). There weren't really that many mice anyway.

"Actually, little one," Astrid said awkwardly. "She does eat mice. Only sometimes though."

Irena still looked disturbed, but she nodded.

Astrid stood up and looked at Hiccup, cat still nestled in her arms. "I know you don't like cats, but I'm keeping her anyway."

"Astrid-"

"Hey," she interrupted. "Your dragon snores. I get a cat. Sounds like a good compromise to me."

"But-"

"Please Daddy?" Irena added. Unfortunately for Hiccup, Irena had a face he could hardly say 'no' to. And she had turned it to the extra-cute setting.

Astrid held the kitten out to Hiccup. "How could you say no to this

sweet little face?"

The tiny feline meowed cutely, almost as if it was saying "I'm cute! I'm cute! Like me!"

Very easily. Hiccup wanted to say. But he couldn't. Not with Astrid and Irena looking at him like that. If it had just been Astrid, it would've been easier, but it was very much impossible with two sets of pleading blue eyes on him.

He sighed and smiled just a little. "Alright, I guess I can put up with her."

"Thank you," Astrid smiled sweetly.

"Irena!" Jakob called from behind them. Irena whipped around. Colby was standing next to him. "Can you come play?"

Irena turned back around and looked up at her parents hopefully.

"Go on," Astrid laughed.

"Thank you!" Irena bounced off towards Jakob and Colby. Safira woke from her perch in a tree and flew clumsily after her friend.

* * *

><p>Astrid was braiding Irena's hair into two braids for bed. The new kitten, whom had been named Patches, was curled up in a tiny ball on Astrid's pillow, sleeping. Safira was curled around the tiny fluffball as if she was protecting it.<p>

"Mommy?" Irena questioned quietly, pulling her knees up to her chest. There was a question she was absolutely dying to know the answer to and had been for a while. Thankfully, Hiccup and Astrid allowed and encouraged her to ask them anything, unlike her real parents.

"Hm?"

"Everyone has a mommy and a daddy, right?"

"Well no," Astrid replied, finishing one of the braids. "Not everyone has a mommy and daddy. You know that."

"I mean like a real mommy and daddy. You need a mommy and a daddy to have a baby, right?" That was how babies worked, wasn't it?

Astrid smiled sadly. She had a feeling she knew where this was going. "Right,"

"So where's Daddy's daddy?"

Astrid finished the other braid and Irena crawled into her lap. Irena didn't need the whole story right now, did she? The story was not a nice one. It gave Astrid nightmares on occasion. Irena did not need any more nightmares. "He-he's dead. He died a few months before Hiccup found you."

"Oh," Irena frowned, snuggling against her. "He's in Val-Valhalla

then, right?" Valhalla was a foreign concept to her. No one cared much about the gods on Sola and Irena's mother, Astrid and Valka had found out one day when Irena was talking to them, was a Christian. Irena's mother wasn't supposed to be Christian, but she was, and she taught Irena things when her father wasn't home.

Irena had started to understand what her new family believed in and she sort of believed in it too, but she also still believed some of what her mother had told her. She wasn't really sure if she was supposed to, but she did anyway.

"That's right."

"Was he nice?"

"He was." Astrid replied. "Of course, like all people do, he had moments where he wasn't so nice and when he misunderstood things, but he meant well."

"Was Daddy sad?"

"Very sad. So was I, so was everyone. He was chief, everyone knew him. We're all still sad. But Daddy misses him most of all."

When people were sad, they cried. Irena didn't like it when people cried. Her daddy probably cried. She didn't want to think about that.

"You helped him, you know."

Irena looked up at Astrid. "Me?"

"You." Astrid nodded. "He was lonely. He needed someone else to love. That's one of the many reasons I'm glad he found you."

Irena smiled a little.

"It's getting late, little one."

Irena yawned, almost as if on cue, and Astrid smiled.

"Let's get you to bed."

Irena slipped onto the floor. Astrid carefully picked Safira up off the pillow and carried her to Irena's room. She set the little dragon down on Irena's pillow and Irena climbed into her bed and grabbed Lena and Kaida.

Astrid tucked her in. "Sweet dreams, Irena."

"I love you." Irena smiled a little.

Astrid kissed her forehead. "I love you too. Good night."

"Good night, Mommy."

Astrid smiled, reached over and rubbed the top of Safira's head, and then left the room.

How on earth were they ever going to tell her how Stoick died? She

would need to know eventually. But she loved Toothless, adored him, and even though he didn't do what he did knowingly, it might forever skew the little girl's thoughts of him. The full truth could wait.

Hiccup came home late. He had missed a week and he had stuff to catch up on. He was exhausted and his head hurt, but there was one thing he had to do before he went to bed.

He quietly entered Irena's room. She was curled up on her side, thumb in her mouth. One day, she'd need to break that habit. That day was not today.

"Good night, little one." he whispered before kissing her temple. Irena made a little sleepy noise and he smiled. He was so glad she was in his life. Toothless nuzzled the little girl gently.

He left Irena's room to go to his and found Astrid also curled up on her side, but she was awake and stroking Patches, who was curled against her stomach, purring.

"Hey," Hiccup said quietly. Toothless heated up his rock bed and curled up on it.

"Hey," Astrid replied, turning her head to look at him. "You look tired."

"That's because I am."

"Long day?"

"Extremely."

"Sorry,"

"Don't be sorry, it's not your fault I feel like my head was bashed in with a rock."

Astrid sighed. "I still feel bad."

He changed the subject. "When did Irena fall asleep?"

"Not sure, but she went to bed like an hour and a half ago."

He got into bed next to her.

"She asked about your dad." Astrid admitted quietly. Toothless whined and tried to make himself as small as possible.

Oh _no_. He rolled over to face her and asked sadly "What'd you tell her?"

"That he was dead and you miss him a lot. I didn't know what else to say."

He sighed. "Okay,"

Toothless whined again.

"Bud," Hiccup rolled back over to face his dragon. "Buddy, come

here."

Toothless got up and slowly made his way to Hiccup, looking like a scolded puppy.

Hiccup put his hand on the Night Fury's snout. "It's not your fault, bud. I know that and you know that. Please don't feel like it was."

Toothless whimpered and nudged his best friend with his snout.

Hiccup scratched Toothless' neck and the dragon licked him.

Hiccup groaned, but he smiled. "Good night, bud."

Toothless didn't go back to his rock bed, but instead, he curled up right where he was. Hiccup reached down and scratched him again before he rolled back over to face Astrid, who was still petting the kitten.

"You should go to bed too, babe." Astrid told him. "You look awful."

He grinned. "Thanks," He went to kiss her, but a tiny hiss made him jump away.

Patches was staring him down with wide, copper eyes glowing in the moonlight.

Astrid laughed and scratched the baby cat behind her ears. She curled back up against Astrid. "Sorry, I guess I'm only allowed to get her attention."

Hiccup groaned. He didn't like that cat, not one little bit. He couldn't even kiss his wife! And they'd only been married a week. What was up with that?

"Good night," Astrid said, a smile in her voice.

Hiccup sighed. "Good night,"

* * *

><p>AN: (*These wedding vows were improve-ed by two of my friends from school when I said I needed help with Hiccstrid vows. They wanted me to add them in somehow. Obviously, not the real vows.)_**

Wow, that's not at all how I intended this chapter to go. That sad turn there, whoops? I didn't mean that to happen right there (that was supposed to be a later chapter with more relevance to the plot).

_Speaking of plot, hold onto your seats, friends. Things are going to intensify in three (four, maybe?) chapters. *evil laughter in the distance* We're about halfway through the story I want to tell. (I'm already thinking sequel, guys. If this plot works the way I want it to and enough people want a sequel, it will be much, _much, _MUCH darker than this one.)_

In other news, I had a terribly long practice test this morning that I nearly cried over and I have to sing tomorrow and Friday for my school's homecoming in choir (and since our theme for homecoming is Halloween, we get to wear costumes in the parade if we want and I'm wearing my Toothless blanket-costume thing). Yay, Alma Maters and Fight songs.

_Anyway, thanks so much for reading! The amount of follows, reviews, and favorites continues to blow me away! You guys (and this fandom) are all fabulous! _

Please review if you can!

See you next week!

~Pink

18. Chapter 18

"Losing baby teeth were a part and parcel of one's life â€" a symbol of growing up, and it is the tooth-fairy that makes this otherwise dreaded and painful process an exciting one â€" something to look forward to." ~Mansi Maheshwari

* * *

><p>"Mwow?"<p>

Astrid blinked her eyes open. Patches was staring at her from her spot next to her pillow. The sunlight was bright. Hiccup's side of the bed was empty. It was...much later than she'd usually wake up.

She swore under her breath (extremely quietly, in case Irena was still home) and got out of bed.

Patches dropped from the bed and wound around Astrid's feet, asking for food the way Safira and other dragons did (they were rubbing off on her).

"Alright, let's get you some food. After I get dressed."

She got dressed in record time and went to the main room. No sign of Irena. She caught sight of a note on the table.

-I took Irena to the Engmans because neither of us had the heart to wake you up. Jakob's mother always gets him up early. Stormfly ate already. See you later.-

It wasn't signed, it didn't have to be. Irena certainly hadn't written it.

Why did she sleep so late? That was totally not normal. She put food down for Patches, scratched the little feline, and hurried outside. Stormfly was waiting eagerly by the door and chirped worriedly, sniffing at her rider.

"I'm fine girl, just tired I guess." Astrid assured, rubbing the

dragon's neck. She climbed into the saddle. It was still early enough that class hadn't started yet at the Academy. She wasn't going to miss that. "Let's go girl."

Stormfly chirped and rose into the air. They made it to the Academy right on time (which was, to her, a little late because she liked to be early).

"I'm glad you're awake, dear." Valka commented as Astrid slipped to the ground. The students and dragons were milling about. "Hiccup was worried."

Astrid rolled her eyes and scratched at that one spot Stormfly could never itch on her snout. "He's always worried."

"Sometimes it's suffocating, but other times it's helpful. He pays so much attention to you, he might catch on that your coming down with something before you do." Valka hesitated for a moment but then pressed her hand to Astrid's forehead. To Astrid's credit, she didn't flinch. "Do you feel alright?"

"I'm fine," Astrid promised with a wave of her hand. She'd know if she was sick. Valka removed her hand.

Well she didn't have a fever. "No headache? Are you still tired?"

"No, I feel fine."

Valka scanned Astrid from head to toe with her eyes. "Are you nauseous?"

Astrid raised an eyebrow. What was with all the questions? "I'm not nauseous." Why would she be nauseous? She hadn't had the flu or anything like that since she was eleven. She felt fine.

Valka smiled just a bit. "Alright, well, I'm glad you aren't sick."

"So am I." Astrid smiled at her mother-in-law before she turned to face the teens. She clapped her hands together twice, effectively shutting everyone up and gaining their attention. "Good morning, everyone. Today we're working on rescues."

* * *

><p>Jakob flopped on his back on the ground. "Irena?"<p>

"What?" Irena asked curiously, stroking Safira, who was in her lap.

"Do you like me?"

"Yes," replied Irena. He was a very nice boy. "You're my friend."

"Not like that."

Irena looked at him funny. "Like what?"

"The other way. Like like."

Irena's eyes widened. She really did like him. As a friend. Colby was her friend too. Did she like like either of them? Could she? She was only four and a half. "I don't know. Maybe."

"That's not a good answer." Jakob replied.

"You're nice and you're funny and you like to play with me. I like you."

Jakob sighed. Trying to get her to understand would prove to be useless, he knew that. "Do you want to go see if Colby's up yet?"

Irena nodded and Safira climbed out of her lap before she stood. Jakob pushed himself up as well and he went in to tell his mother where they were headed before he raced Irena to Colby's house, making dragon noises all the way.

* * *

><p>It was dinner and Hiccup was running late, but that was not unusual.<p>

Irena was sitting next to Astrid, taking about her day with her two best friends around bites of food. Astrid hadn't eaten much despite the fact that salmon was her favorite. She wasn't hungry.

Irena had noticed this behavior and thought it to be quite odd but she didn't mention her concern because she was four years old and had no business meddling and intruding in grown-ups' business.

Luckily for Irena, a lot had happened that day in her little life to distract her. Not only did Jakob say that he like liked her (whatever that meant), but Colby had found a new secret hideout and Dagny fell face first into a mud puddle and cried (which was awful and not something to laugh about, but Dagny was a horrible little bully and even Astrid chuckled a little).

Irena was chewing when she heard an awful little crack and her mouth didn't hurt exactly, but it felt odd. She squeaked in shock when the tooth she pushed on with her tongue wiggled.

"I broke it!" Irena gasped in horror, putting a hand over her mouth. Tears welled up in her eyes not out of pain, but of fear.

"Broke what?" Astrid asked, trying to pull the girl's hands away. "Let me see."

"My tooth! It moves! See?" Sure enough, a tooth on the bottom left of Irena's mouth moved when she demonstrated. "Can you fix it?"

Astrid smiled. "No, little one. I can't. Teeth are supposed to do that one time each. You'll loose that one and a new one will grow in its place. You'll loose most of your baby teeth over the next few years."

"Does it hurt?" Irena questioned worriedly.

"Towards the end a little, but when mine got too annoying, I just pulled them out. Most people wait for them to come out on their own." Astrid kissed Irena's forehead and smoothed her hair. "You'll be fine, Irena. Loosing teeth means your growing up. You're almost five and you're getting to be a big girl."

Irena beamed. She wanted to be a big girl.

"Ah, Snotlout's finally becoming a big girl," Hiccup said, slipping next to Irena at the table. "That's fantastic news." Astrid rolled her eyes and smiled.

"No Daddy!" Irena giggled. "My tooth is wiggly. Look!" So she showed him.

Hiccup smiled. "Well, would you look at that. It is loose, isn't it?"

Irena nodded proudly. "I'm growing up."

"Yes you are." Hiccup replied, ruffling her hair affectionately. "And you're getting to be a very sweet and beautiful big girl at that."

Irena smiled happily and went back to her food, messing with her tooth every little while. She wondered why her daddy had a tiny little space in between his teeth and her mommy didn't. And why some people had sideways and crooked teeth. Would her big girl teeth be crooked or straight? Would they have spaces between them?

"Aren't you eating, Astrid?" Hiccup questioned his wife (which was still so weird to call her, even after a month and a half of being married), concern evident.

"Hm?" Astrid looked up from pushing her food around her plate. She had been lost in thought. "No, not really."

"But salmon's your favorite." Hiccup pointed out suspiciously. "Are you feeling alright? When did you wake up?"

"I'm fine!" Astrid said rather loudly and defensively, startling Irena some. She threw her hands up in the air. "I'm not sick. I feel absolutely normal. I'm just not hungry! I played Twenty Questions with your mother this morning and I don't want a repeat of it."

"Sor-ry, Ms. Grumpy." Hiccup retorted dryly. Her attitude surprised him. It was just a question. "Can't a guy be concerned about his wife?"

Astrid scowled. "Not when she's perfectly capable of knowing whether to be concerned or not."

Before Hiccup could respond, Irena spoke up, albeit quietly and meekly. "Please don't fight. I don't like fights."

Hiccup closed his mouth and Astrid started to pick at her food again.

By the time dinner was over, they were speaking again. Irena wasn't

used to their little spats, but they were. It had happened several times before. Just not about something stupid like salmon.

* * *

><p>Irena tossed a stick for Safira to get. The tiny dragon ran with all her might, but she couldn't keep up with Stormfly, who brought the stick back in an elegant flourish.<p>

Irena patted them both and Safira climbed up to her shoulder and sat obediently, rubbing against the side of her face. Irena giggled and reached up to stroke the little dragon.

"Did you fetch Safira's stick again, girl?" Astrid asked her Nadder, scratching her under the chin. She was outside with Irena while Hiccup was working on something important in the house with Toothless for company. Stormfly clucked happily and nuzzled Astrid more so than usual before sniffing her all over.

"What has gotten into all of you?" Astrid asked mostly Stormfly, hugging the dragon's neck lightly. "I'm fine, alright? I'm not sick. I promise."

Stormfly clucked once more and then gave a quiet purr.

"Good girl," Astrid said, giving her dragon a passing scratch before going over to Irena, who was chasing after Safira in a sloppy circle in the fading sunlight. They were adorable really. And so much fun. If Astrid married Hiccup and Irena wasn't with them, their house would be way too quiet. Irena wasn't a particularly loud child, but just her presence and her quiet laughter was enough to make the house feel more full of life. Four year olds had a way of doing that.

Irena tried to stop in front of Astrid, but the momentum of her running continued to push her forward. Astrid laughed and caught her in a hug.

Irena giggled and looked up, her one wiggle-toothed smile was innocent and genuine. It always was, despite how terrible her life had been. Her experiences hadn't stolen her sparkle and her happiness. And somehow, that made her smile that much better to see each and every day. "Sorry,"

"You're fine." Astrid replied, still smiling. "It's getting pretty late, little one. I think it's bathtime."

"Okay," Irena chirped, taking Astrid's hand. She turned to Safira. "Come." The little blue dragon bounded towards them.

Stormfly gave both humans a good-night nuzzle and they gave her scratches in return before she went off to the stables. She was a particularly vain breed of dragon and she prided herself on her beauty and for that beauty, she needed her own space.

Irena wasn't the kind of child to despise baths, so she was easier than most children to wrangle.

After Irena was all tucked in and asleep, Astrid joined Hiccup on the roof, which had turned into one of his spots to escape. Especially at

night.

It was very dark. The clouds had blotted out most of the moonlight. There was a big shadowy figure sitting at the peak of the house, watching over Hiccup and everything around him with big green eyes. Toothless.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked quietly, sitting next to Hiccup. It was quiet enough that he could pretend he didn't hear it if he didn't want to answer on purpose.

He sighed. "Everything,"

"Can I help?" she started to braid a little bit of his hair, twisting it at lightning speed.

"No, I don't think so." his voice was barely above a whisper and he didn't so much as glance at her.

She finished the braid and her hand fell to his shoulder. "Try me,"

"I have too much to do. I'm gone all day. I miss everything. I miss Irena... I miss you." he shrugged. "I don't know how he did it, how he didn't lose it."

Astrid followed where he was looking with her own eyes. He was looking at his father's statue. Of course he was.

"You're allowed to ask for help, you know." she replied quietly.

"I don't like putting pressure on people."

"It's not pressure if we want to help."

"It's not your job, it's mine."

"I don't know if you know this, Mr. I'll-Do-Everything-On-My-Own, but when you asked me to marry you, I got dragged into this too. I'm your wife now, the wife of the chief. I'm supposed to help you. I want to help you. Your dad didn't have that when your mom was gone. He threw himself into it. Probably partly because he missed her and because he didn't know what else to do with his time. Let me help you, Hiccup. Let us help you. We want to."

He looked at her, smiling crookedly in that charming way he did. "Astrid, I really do fall more and more in love with you everyday."

She smiled. "I feel the same about you, you big mush ball"

He leaned in and kissed her.

When they broke apart, she put her head on his shoulder and he put his arm around her waist.

They sat together in contented silence as the night grew steadily cooler.

* * *

><p>AN: Hello friends! I hope you liked this chapter! Irena's growing up! (Is that a childhood romance on the horizon...?) It may be the last one for a few weeks. I'll try to get one up next week, but as I have two tests, two club meeting, a choir concert, Halloween, and a school trip, I can't guarantee anything.

_**

There seems to have been a miscommunication that I will clear up: this story isn't over yet. I'll let you know when I start getting closer to the end. To the people who said they'd unfollow and stop reading; this story has a T rating for a reason explained a a number of chapters back. And it's obviously not for language. It won't get too dark, however. I'm saving that for the sequel.

Anyway, thanks so much for reading! I love you guys, all of you, and I'm blown away that so many people read this story! You're amazing!

See you soon!

~Pink

19. Chapter 19

_ "A new baby is like the beginning of all things - wonder, hope, a dream of possibilities."_ ~Eda J. Le Shan

* * *

><p>Irena poked Hiccup in the arm. "Daddy," she whispered.<p>

Hiccup stirred and rolled over, blinking sleepily. "Irena? What's wrong?"

"Where's Mommy?"

Hiccup, in his tired state, failed to notice Astrid's absence until then. He sat up, looking for any sign of her. "I don't know, little one." he rubbed his face. Toothless crooned from the corner of the room. "Do you know where she is, bud?"

Toothless nodded. He did know. And he'd show them.

Irena was already dressed, but he wasn't.

Astrid would never leave without a note. "Let me get dressed and then we'll go find her, okay?"

Irena nodded just as Safira playfully chased Patches into the room. They did a full lap around the room before bounding back out and Irena followed after them giggling.

Hiccup and Toothless came into the main room just as the front door opened. Astrid sheepishly stepped inside.

"Hi Mommy!" Irena said from the couch where she was being overrun with the affection of two small animals.

"Hi little one," Astrid replied, nowhere near as cheerful as usual. Toothless came to her, tongue lolling out, and sniffed her all over, to see if there was any change. She lightly pushed him away, making him whine.

"We were just about to go looking for you, Milady." Hiccup said. "Where've you been?"

"Um," Astrid messed with her bangs. She looked everywhere but his face. "Can I talk to you? Alone?"

Oh gods, that was never a good sign. What had he done now? He swallowed hard. "Uh, yeah, of course."

They went into their room and shut the door behind them. Astrid leaned back against the wall, arms crossed loosely, still averting her eyes from his. "I went to the healer because I was starting to get annoyed with the fact that I wake up late now and eat weird."

"And?" he prompted anxiously. Was she okay?

"It could be worse."

"Huh?"

"I'm pregnant." she said quietly before biting her lip.

"Pregnant?" Hiccup asked, eyes wide. He continued, moving his hands around like usual. "Like, with a baby? What? Why? But h-how? I mean, I know how but we've only been- um..." he shook his head and took a deep breath. This was a surprise, but such great news! "Wow..."

She looked up at him, unusually timid. "Wow?"

"Yes wow." he looked at her face. "You're not happy."

"I am," she protested halfheartedly.

"No, no you're not. I know you. You're not happy."

Unexpected tears welled up in her eyes and she stepped forward towards him and he wrapped his arms around her. "Fine, I'm not." she murmured.

"Why?" he asked gently. He was happy. She liked kids too.

"Because... because..." she sniffled hard. "Because-" she pulled away from him so hard, he stumbled backwards. "I don't know." she said roughly. She wasn't crying anymore. She was just upset. And bitter? She was facing away from him now.

"Astrid, that's not a good reason."

"You sound like my father." she said coolly. "This is your fault, you moron." She'd have called him something much worse than a moron if a four year old wasn't less than fifty feet away.

"Excuse me?" he demanded, a little irritated. "My fault? Just

mine?"

"I don't want to talk about this right now." she tried to walk around him, but he caught her arm. She glared fire and swords and daggers at him. "Let me go."

"No," he replied. "You aren't leaving until I get a real reason, young lady."

"Are you grounding me?" she growled.

"In both a literal and metaphorical sense, yes." he replied sharply, sitting right in front of the door so she couldn't leave. "I don't have any plans. We can be here all day."

"Sometimes I really hate you." she grumbled, sitting on the bed, arms crossed.

He shrugged. "Eh, I'm used to it. Take all the time you need."

They stared at each other for a good few minutes before either of them moved. Astrid wiped at her face. She couldn't hide tears as well as she could when they were younger. Her bangs were shorter now and Hiccup had to admit that he kind of liked her better like that.

"I don't think I'm ready." she admitted barely above a whisper. It was a breakthrough, somewhat anyway. She looked away from him again.

"Ready for what exactly?" he asked, trying to stand up (which, with one metal leg, was not as easy as it once was. Especially because he had decided to cross his legs).

"To be a mother." she started shaking her leg the way she did when she was anxious or nervous.

"Astrid, you're a great mother!" he exclaimed, surprised. Irena adored her! He finally decided to lean forward onto his hands and knees to get up, which is every bit as hilarious to watch as it sounds. Astrid even managed a small laugh and rolled her eyes. After he recovered from the blow to his ego, he sat next to his wife (would he ever get used to calling her that? He had called her his girlfriend in conversation up until the day before their wedding, for Thor's sake) on the bed.

"Irena's four. We didn't have to teach her to talk or walk or count or read. She knew all that when you brought her here. We have to start from the beginning with this one."

"So?" he shrugged. "We'll figure it out. I'm sure we will."

Hiccup and his optimism... "What if I don't? What if I can't? What if I don't have the patience... what if I yell at it too much?" she dropped her voice. "What- what if it hates me?" Ah, there it is.

"Astrid," Hiccup hooked his finger under her chin and forced her to look at him. "Nobody in their right mind could hate you."

"You don't know that."

"Is that what's really worrying you?"

She nodded just a little.

"You are too you not to like! You're fun and smart and adorable-" she crinkled her nose at this. She didn't like being called adorable.

"And you have a heart of gold underneath that rough exterior of yours. Plus, you're a really good hugger and I don't know of any kid that would ever turn down a good cuddle. Sure, you'll make mistakes and I will too, that's how life works, isn't it? But everything will be just fine. I mean, Irena's happy and healthy isn't she? And this kid'll have the entire island looking out for it. Not to mention two very smothering grandmothers, a grandfather that will teach it to throw a weapon before it can count to ten, three overprotective dragons, a big sister who will certainly make it feel included and us. And I don't know about you, but as mismatched as this family is, I think it's a pretty great one. We'll be just fine."

A small smile tugged at Astrid's lips. "You're right."

Hiccup smiled that cocky, lopsided grin of his that she loved. "I usually am."

She scowled and looked ready to punch him, but took them both by surprise by kissing gently instead.

"What was that for?" he asked quietly. Their foreheads were touching.

"For being you." she replied, smiling. "The you that I, by some crazy chance, got lucky enough to get stuck with for the rest of my life."

He chuckled. "You're a pretty good catch yourself, Milady."

He barely finished the sentence before her lips were on his again.

"This is exactly how we got into this predicament in the first place." he laughed after the kiss. "Not that I mind, of course."

"You are such a dork." she punched his shoulder and stood up. "I think we better go back out there before the resident big sister thinks we disappeared into thin air."

"Good idea," he replied, standing up and taking her hand. He bit his lip for a quick second. "Is it alright to tell her?" Unfortunately, Vikings tended to lose several children each at birth, before, or soon after. Usually, people tended to wait to make the announcement for as long as possible (which was typically until the expectant mother started to not be able to hide the fact any longer) just to be on the safe side.

"Yeah," Astrid said, a hint of a laugh in her voice. "Apparently, I made it nearly half way through the whole ordeal before I got too annoyed."

He looked at her midsection for a second. She certainly didn't look

four months pregnant. Maybe a little? Not much though.

She shrugged. "Your guess is as good as mine. It's there though, I promise." She tugged on his hand. "I think we should inform Irena that there will be a new member of the family, huh?"

"Yeah,"

* * *

><p>Irena had become concerned her parents room had been quiet for a long time. What did that mean?<p>

Toothless had stretched out in a patch of sunlight from the window and Patches had started batting at the dust particles circling in the sunlit patch, bumping into the big dragon every so often, but he didn't move. Safira had snuggled into Irena's lap.

Finally, after what seemed like hours, the door opened and Astrid and Hiccup came out hand in hand and looking happy. Irena cocked her head a bit. They weren't mad at each other...

"Mommy has something to tell you." Hiccup said, smiling. To think, only a few months ago, the very idea of Astrid being pregnant almost made him fall out of his chair. Now look where they were.

Safira hopped out of Irena's lap but stayed nearby. Astrid sat next to Irena and took her hand. "Do you remember a while back when you asked me if I was ever going to have a baby?"

Irena nodded. Of course she remembered! Daddy almost fainted.

"Well, I am." she supposed she could have been a little more tactful in the delivery, but it came across crystal clear.

"Really?" Irena asked, eyes wide.

"Really," Astrid responded, smiling.

Irena threw her arms around Astrid, smiling widely. "I'm going to be a big sister!"

"You certainly are." Astrid hugged the four year old tightly. "A wonderful big sister."

"Hey, where's my hug?" Hiccup asked, sounding pitiful.

"Get over here, muttonhead." Astrid demanded. Hiccup laughed and obliged.

The animals joined too, Safira on Irena's lap, Toothless nuzzling them all, and Patches in Astrid's staring Hiccup down.

"Group hug!" Irena chirped happily, contently cuddled in her parents' arms.

Hiccup and Astrid smiled at each other. What a full, happy house this would be in a few months. Lots of group hugs were to be expected in the future.

* * *

><p>Hiccup and Astrid decided to tell their parents together. Somehow, Hiccup convinced his mother to go to the Hofferson's that evening before dinner (before the real announcement) and the older adults were sitting at the table, eyeing the younger couple and four year old suspiciously.<p>

"What's this all about?" Axel, Astrid's father, demanded. Hiccup almost felt like turning around and leaving. This wouldn't be a pleasant conversation. Astrid's father was a nice guy (albeit, big and scary-looking) but Hiccup had the feeling that basically saying 'Hey, I knocked up your only daughter. Surprise!' was not going to blow over very well.

Astrid squeezed his hand. "It's nothing bad, Daddy. I promise." Hiccup knew the only reason Astrid called her father that anymore was either when she wanted something or she wanted him to take her side. Astrid was an only child, so she was her father's little girl. And she was treated like it. Even now. Especially when she called him 'Daddy'.

Astrid's mother raised an eyebrow, she knew all of her tricks. "Astrid Erika," Ramona warned the same time as Valka said:

"Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third,"

"You kids better start talkin'." Axel added.

"Go on, Irena. You tell them." Astrid prompted.

Irena nodded. She looked at her grandparents and smiled a little. "I'm going to be a big sister."

It took a few seconds for it to settle in, but as soon as it did Ramona started to cry and Valka smiled fondly, yet tearfully, at them. Axel just raised an eyebrow at Hiccup. Hiccup gulped. He and Astrid were married now, but Thor almighty, Astrid's father was good with a sword.

"Oh, my baby." Ramona choked out, standing up to hug her daughter.

"Well," Axel said to anyone who was listening. "That was fast."

"_Daddy_," Astrid complained, still being hugged. It's not like they were strangers. She first kissed Hiccup when they were fifteen! People had only been asking when they were getting married since her seventeenth birthday. It was about time, wasn't it? At least they were married, right?

Astrid's mother dragged Hiccup into the hug as well, squeezing him and Astrid far too tight, still sniffing.

When she finally let them go, she wiped her eyes and started muttering something about blankets.

Valka hugged them next, she wasn't crying at all.

"Well," Axel said after the hugging ended. "Hiccup, boy, you're really lucky I like you."

Hiccup smiled. Okay. So he wasn't going to get murdered. Good.

* * *

><p>Irena ran to join Jakob, Colby and their friends at their usual table. Dagny sat alone at the end, scowling (like usual).<p>

Irena had promised not to tell anyone and she was going to keep that promise. No one was telling anyone (Astrid and Hiccup had announced their engagement officially and they were going to see if anyone could guess their news this time around).

Irena knew of this plan and was swinging her legs anxiously, waiting to see who would guess first.

"My mommy told me I'm allowed to get a Terrible Terror for my birthday next year." Ginia said proudly.

Most of the kids 'wow'ed in unison and Irena smiled.

"I want a blue one like you, Irena. Or maybe purple."

"Purple's my second favorite color." Irena replied.

"I wish I was allowed to get a Terror." Jakob sighed. "My parents say I can't."

"Why?" Irena asked.

Jakob shrugged. "They say I'm not responsible enough."

"Be 'sponsible then," Colby suggested in his usual quiet way. "Maybe then you can get wun." He still had his baby lisp.

"Good idea, Colby." Jakob smiled. "I'll do that."

Colby sat up a little straighter after that. A bigger boy taking your advice was something to be proud of.

* * *

><p>"Are you feeling better, Astrid?" Fishlegs asked casually.<p>

Hiccup hid his smirk with a well-timed fake cough.

Astrid brushed her hair out of her face and answered with a breezy no, like nothing was wrong.

"Um," Fishlegs looked confused. "Did you have a cold or something? Is it gone?"

"No, it won't go away for a while."

And she was so calm about this because...?

Suddenly, Ruffnut thumped her fist on the table. "You're not sick,

you're pregnant."

Of all the people that sat with them, Ruffnut figured it out? That was actually very impressive.

"How did you come to that conclusion?" Fishlegs asked Ruff.

"I'm not as stupid as I look, ya know." Ruff replied. "The dragons don't let her out of their sight and Hiccup's been hovering closer than usual today and she's eating weird. It's obvious. Plain as the booger in my nose."

They were all frankly too shocked by her deductive reasoning skills to call her out on using the wrong phrasing for that expression. All eyes just slowly turned to Astrid and Hiccup.

"Well, well, well," Snotlout said with a smug smile. "It looks like I won the bet."

Tuffnut and Fishlegs sighed.

"Bet?" Hiccup questioned.

"We took guesses on how long it would take for this to happen. I had under six months." Tuffnut had under a year but over six months and Fishlegs said over a year.

"Why are we even friends with you?" Astrid asked, somewhere between insulted and amused. Placing bets on pregnancies was a new one, she had to admit.

"Because you can't get enough of our charm and devilishly good looks." Snotlout offered.

Hiccup rubbed his hand down his face and Astrid rolled her eyes in reply.

"I had absolutely nothing to do with this." Eret announced. "And seeing as no one has said it yes, it seems I will be the first to congratulate you." Since coming to Berk, Eret had taken to looking after Astrid from a distance because he felt like he owed her and Hiccup for being such a jerk in the beginning. This was made odd considering that the two he began to view almost as younger cousins were the ones that taught him the most about dragons.

"Thank you Eret," Hiccup said pointedly. "At least someone on this island had manners and didn't bet on-"

Astrid stifled a laugh. Any way he finished that sentence wouldn't be good. "Please don't finish that."

Hiccup looked over at her. "I won't."

Astrid leaned against him. He was such a dork. But he was her dork. And she loved him all the more for it.

"Is no one gonna talk about the fact that they're going to have a smelly, drooling kid that won't shut up with them all the time now?" Ruffnut asked. "Babies are gross, why would you want one?"

Astrid felt the whole 'when you're married, you might understand' lecture on her tongue, but decided not to say a word.

"They're... well, they're not babies forever." Hiccup said.

Ruff scrunched up her nose. "I know, then they grow up into teenagers."

Good point.

"I mean, if you want to be puked on by a tiny human, no one's stopping you." Ruff shrugged. "Have fun with that."

That, in Ruff terms anyway, translated into a congratulations.

"I'm not babysitting it. Ever." Snotlout proclaimed. "Not even if you beg and plead."

"Yeah, me either." Tuff added.

"I like babies." Fishlegs countered. "They're cute."

"Have you told Irena?" Eret asked curiously. Irena had grown on all of them since she came to Berk, but Eret had a super soft spot for her (and all children really).

"We have actually," Hiccup replied.

Astrid smiled. "She's very excited."

"How come you haven't made an announcement?" Fishlegs asked.

"We wanted to see if anyone would figure it out." Astrid replied. "Beyond Ruff. Hiccup almost passed out when we announced we were going to get married."

"I did not," Hiccup protested stubbornly. He may have been nervous, but it certainly wasn't pass-out level nervous.

"Yes you did," Astrid snuggled closer to him anyway. One of the many good things about Hiccup was that he was very good for cuddling with for some reason.

"Pardon me while I vomit," Snotlout said. He wasn't the cuddling type.

Astrid glared at him.

"Word of advice, my friend," Eret said to Snotlout. "I wouldn't mess with her too much now. I've known extremely gentle girls to get upset easily when they were pregnant."

Hiccup chuckled, knowing that Eret implied that Astrid could be even worse just due to her nature.

"What was that for?" Astrid demanded of him.

"Nothing," Hiccup replied quickly before kissing the top of her head. "Nothing."

Gobber was passing them just as Eret spoke. He stopped dead. He wasn't stupid. "Care to explain, boy?" Gobber asked Hiccup, smiling a little.

"Uh, explain what?" Hiccup questioned, trying to look innocent.

"I'm sure you know exactly what." Gobber raised his eyebrow and looked at Astrid who was smiling. "It's true then, lass?"

"Depends," Astrid replied, still smiling.

"You're pregnant?"

Astrid nodded.

Gobber laughed shortly. "Well, that's good news, isn't it? How come neither of ya said anything?"

"We were waiting to see if anyone could figure it out." Hiccup replied.

"You kids," Gobber shook his head, but he was smiling. He clapped Hiccup on the shoulder. "Well, I'm happy for the both of ya."

"Thank you," Astrid responded.

"Mind if I-?"

Hiccup and Astrid glanced at each other. Neither of them minded.

"Go on," Hiccup said.

"Hey Mulch!" Gobber shouted.

Mulch looked over from a table diagonally behind them.

"I won the bet!"

Astrid groaned and covered her face. Why was this such a popular bet?

Hiccup rolled his eyes.

"Not yet ya haven't, ya fool! I didn' hear 'em say it!" Mulch replied.

"Well it's true!"

Mulch looked at Astrid. "If ya don't mind, Astrid, I'd like to hear it from you."

"Fine, I'm pregnant." Astrid grumbled.

Everyone within earshot was shocked silent.

"Fine, Gobber, you win." Mulch sighed.

Everyone, it seemed, knew about Gobber and Mulch's bet and even those who hadn't heard Astrid speak put two and two together.

"Astrid's pregnant!" someone said happily. Random shout of congratulations and cheers went up all around.

Astrid's mother started to cry again.

"'Bout time!" someone else yelled.

The children looked to Irena, who just smiled.

"There's always something to look forward to with you kids," Gobber said to Hiccup and Astrid.

Everyone was happy, coming over and congratulating them. Hiccup and Astrid were happy too.

Until Hiccup remembered someone was missing. He sighed.

Astrid knew exactly what he was thinking about.

If this baby was a boy, Stoick was definitely going to be in his name somewhere.

* * *

><p>AN: So many people gue_**_**ssed that Astrid was pregnant! Nice guessing, everyone. **_

_**Hey all, I'm back from my four day school trip! I went to Colonial Williamsburg and for those of you who aren't from the US or don't know what it is, it's a living museum of Williamsburg, Virginia around the time of the American Revolution. People are dressed up and they pretend they live in the 1770s. It was an amazing time. (I accidentally called my roommate Astrid on the way home. Whoops.)
**_

**I finished this chapter on the ride there and I like how it turned out. I hope you like it too! :) Babies are so fun to write and I'm really looking forward to this one.**

**The next chapter will be up next week, I hope! **

**Let me know what you think about this chapter with a review or a favorite!**

**See you soon!**

20. Chapter 20

This chapter is super short, sorry about that! I've been super busy and this is the best I've got. Next chapter will be longer, I promise.

We've skipped into the future. Not much, but enough where everyone knows of Astrid's pregnancy. My timeline's off and I know this, but my plot changed drastically from when I first started writing this story so many things have changed and I apologize for this. Just thought I'd let you know.

* * *

><p>"The great thing about getting older is that you don't lose all the other ages you've been."** ~Madeleine L'Engle

* * *

><p>Hiccup tended to forget when his birthday was for some reason. He didn't forget exactly, he just thought it was important enough to remember. He hated big things, he didn't like to cause a fuss.<p>

Astrid never forgot his birthday. She also knew about his distaste for big party things. Usually, she found him something little and passed it to him in the morning and said Happy Birthday and maybe they'd go somewhere, just the two of them, and that was that. That was exactly what she was planning on doing this time.

Unfortunately, no one else had the same idea. In the village's eyes, it was a big birthday for him (his sixteenth birthday was the first and last big party he ever let happen)- he was twenty one now and it was his first birthday as not only a husband and father but as chief.

However, Astrid still intended to go somewhere quiet with him. Irena already told her that she wanted to stay and play with Colby and her other friends, so as long as everything went well, it was just going to be the two of them.

The cove, at the very least, was where they were going to go.

If she could drag herself out of bed.

Astrid just didn't want to get up and whenever she tried, she got a pounding headache.

Irena had come into their room sometime in the middle of the night simply because she couldn't sleep and she was still curled up on her side, snuggled between both Astrid and Hiccup (who had his birthday off and was, apparently, catching up on his sleep).

Toothless whimpered at Astrid from the foot of the bed, obviously concerned.

"I'm fine, boy. Really." Astrid said to the dragon, keeping her voice down for Hiccup and Irena's sake.

Toothless gave her a look that simply said he didn't believe her and came over to her, nuzzling her gently.

Astrid smiled and scratched him, making him purr softly. "You're a good boy, Toothless."

Toothless licked her just a little (he and Stormfly were more gentle with her now than they were with even Irena) before nuzzling at her stomach very softly, which evoked a little flutter.

Astrid put her hand on the dragon's head, smiling. "Looks like you're our babysitter, boy. No one else is interested."

Toothless immediately looked at her like she was insane, narrowing his eyes and snorting a bit of smoke out of his nostrils.

"How about playmate? Think you'd do better at that job?"

Toothless smiled a gummy smile at her and nuzzled her again. Yes, he'd be a good playmate.

Astrid's sudden burst of quiet laughter startled both Patches and Safira, who were curled around each other on an empty shelf. Hiccup's conditions of Patches staying was that the cat didn't sleep on the bed (or else he'd never get to get close to Astrid) and that Astrid would train her not to hiss at him. Both were done. Patches slept on an empty shelf overlooking the room (And Astrid, which kept her happy) and when Irena came in during the night, Safira followed and jumped up to snuggle with her friend. Patches growled a little at the interruption of her slumber, for she was a bit like Stormfly in the fact that she needed her beauty sleep. Safira opened her eyes, picked her head up, saw that Irena was still sleeping, and went back to sleep herself.

Hiccup stirred next to Astrid, blearily blinking open his eyes. "What... what time is it?" The sound of his voice made Toothless go to the other side of the bed and nudge Hiccup in the back sharply with his snout.

"I don't know," Astrid said, turning over slowly (not being able to do things quickly because she was pregnant was kind of a downside to the whole thing). "Nine maybe? Why?"

"Nine!" Hiccup was suddenly very awake and he sat up quickly, making Irena roll over towards Astrid and Toothless jump as if he'd seen a spider.

"Where's the fire, Chief?" Astrid teased. "You have a day off, remember? It's your birthday."

Hiccup visibly relaxed. "It's... it's my birthday?"

"Yes, babe. Your birthday. You know, the day you were born on twenty one years ago?"

"But... But it's not snowing." It was technically early winter, but it hadn't snowed much at all yet. Understandably confusing for a half awake person who was used to a blizzard on his birthday.

She smiled. "We're having an off year, Hiccup."

"Wait, it's nine and you're still in bed..." he looked quizzically at her. "Are you feeling okay?"

"I feel fine. Until I try to sit up."

"Munchkin giving you problems?"

"Yep," Astrid sighed. She was glad she was only at the 'random flutters' stage. She couldn't imagine what it would be like when the baby started actually kicking. "Sorry,"

"Sorry for what?"

"We were supposed to go to the cove or somewhere and I don't feel up to it."

"Hey, I'm fine with staying here with you."

"But it's your birthday and-"

Hiccup shook his head and interrupted "Exactly. It's my birthday and I'd be more than happy to spend the day here with you."

Astrid frowned. But that's not how it was supposed to work. But if he was okay with it...

Irena woke up then from the talking, stretching her little arms out and sitting up. "Happy birthday Daddy!" she cried, throwing her arms around Hiccup's middle, awake as ever.

"Thanks, little one." Hiccup replied, hugging her back. "Are you going to spend the day with me too?"

Irena glanced at Astrid. She had said she'd go play with Colby today, but now she wanted to stay with them. Astrid smiled at her. Irena looked back at Hiccup. "Can I?"

"If you want to." he replied. "I'm afraid we're going to be lazy today, though. Mommy doesn't feel very good today."

"That's okay." Irena smiled brightly. Being lazy usually meant cuddles and she liked cuddles.

"Okay, lazy day it is then." Hiccup said before flopping back on the bed, pulling Irena down with him. She squealed with laughter and he tickled her, making her laugh harder.

Astrid laughed at the two of them and tugged the blanket over the two of them, shocking them and making them all laugh harder. Hiccup was such a good father. Irena and this baby were lucky kids.

* * *

><p>It took a while, but Astrid did eventually feel up to doing something.<p>

The three of them and their dragons went to the cove. Hiccup played with Irena for a while, picking her up upside-down and pretending like it was the most normal thing in world, letting her think she was sneaking up on him, the type of silly, simple things that made little kids so happy and that parents were great at.

When Irena tired herself out some, she had come to sit next to her mother who had been watching them play. Astrid was sitting near the little pond in the cove, giving Stormfly a good amount of attention because Astrid was, ashamed to admit, neglecting the Nadder a little as of late.

Stormfly was purring softly and Astrid was completely engrossed in scratching her and talking to her, so Irena didn't want to bother them. Instead, she peered into the little, just barely frozen over pond. A few fish lazily swam by, glinting in the sunlight. Another

glint, an unmoving one, laying at the bottom of the pond, caught her eye.

"What do you see, little one?" Hiccup asked, crouching next to her. The look on her face was an obvious one of curiosity and confusion.

Irena pointed into the clear water at the shiny thing. "What's that?"

Hiccup leaned more over the water, trying to get a better look. "I-I don't know, kiddo."

"Don't you dare stick your arm in that water." Astrid warned from behind them. It was too cold for that.

"Wasn't going to." Hiccup promised sincerely. "We jut want to know what this is."

"What?" Astrid asked, kneeling down next to Hiccup, who looked a little more concerned than necessary.

"There," Irena said, pointing once more to the static glint.

"Hm," Astrid bit her lip. "I don't know. Stormfly?"

The Nadder came to Astrid's side. Astrid pointed into the pond. "Fetch,"

Stormfly clucked and put her head into the water, when she came back up, a small metal object was held delicately in her mouth. She dropped it near Astrid's hands.

"Good girl!" Astrid cooed, rubbing the dragon's cold snout. "Thank you." Stormfly cooed softly and went off to nap with Toothless.

"What is it?" Hiccup asked.

Astrid examined the little thing and wiped it on the grass to get off the grime and rust from the pond. "A knife?"

"No," Hiccup said suddenly, plucking it from her hands, amazed. "It's a dagger. This is mine!"

"Yours?" Astrid looked incredulous. "Why was it at the bottom of a pond?"

"When I first came to see Toothless, he wouldn't let me near him because I had this with me." Hiccup explained. "I dropped it and kicked it into the pond and then he ate the fish I brought him." Hiccup smiled. "I almost forgot about this."

Irena had heard the stories about the time before Hiccup met Toothless and how Vikings and Dragons hated each other. It was thanks to the two of them that the two species now lived in harmony.

"Funny how things change." Hiccup said. He looked over to Toothless and held up the dagger. "Remember this, bud?"

Toothless nodded. Yes, he remembered.

"What are you going to do with it?" Irena asked.

"Well, it hasn't been missed for five years and it won't do me any good now. Might as well stay here, huh?"

Astrid shrugged. "If you say so."

Hiccup dropped the dagger back into the pond, where it returned to its spot at the bottom of the pond.

* * *

><p>It was later now, the sun was setting, and to see it properly, Hiccup, Astrid, and Irena (along with their dragons) went to a higher point on the island.<p>

Stormfly and Safira were curled up beside Toothless, who was happy to act as a warm, scaly couch for his human family. They were leaning up against him, Astrid had her head on Hiccup's shoulder and Irena was curled against Hiccup's other side, thumb in her mouth.

They weren't saying much, but they didn't have to. It was nice just to have a quiet moment for themselves without the chance of being interrupted for once.

The sun made the winter clouds a pale pink and orange pattern in the sky and reflected off the calm water of the ocean in the kind of way that made you want to paint the scene. It was a beautiful sunset.

Hiccup could almost feel Irena dozing off next to him. He smiled and held her closer to him.

"This is the best birthday I've ever had." he said. And he meant it too. What was better than spending a day with his two favorite girls and three favorite dragons? He didn't care that he spent most of it inside. It was a fantastic day anyway.

"You deserve good birthdays." Astrid replied quietly. Irena nodded sleepily in agreement against Hiccup's side.

"You guys are the best, you know that?" Hiccup's question was directed to all the dragons and Astrid and Irena.

The dragons cooed, Irena giggled quietly, and Astrid, well, was Astrid, so she said "We know,"

Hiccup laughed.

"Happy Birthday, dork." Astrid said. "We love you."

"I love you guys too."

* * *

><p>AN: Hello fellow Dragons fans! I hope you enjoyed this cute little chapter. I enjoyed writing this a lot and my best friend helped me with this a bit. Next chapter will be so much

longer, I swear. **_

**I can't believe this is the twentieth chapter. This is a huge milestone for me!**

**Please leave a review if you can, they are very much appreciated! The amount of attention this story gets continues to amaze me every single day. You guys can bet your buttons that there will be a sequel after I finish this. You guys are awesome.**

****I hope you're all having a great week. **_See you next time. **_

**~Pink**

21. Chapter 21

**Happy Wednesday! :)**

* * *

><p>"It is a happy talent to know how to play."
**~Ralph Waldo Emerson

* * *

><p>It was very much snowing. Snowing too much for anyone to be outside for very long.<p>

Hiccup wasn't just 'anyone', however, so he was excluded from this rule of the sane people. It wasn't too cold, though, just snowing, so it wasn't so bad. He and Toothless had left an unearthly hour that morning, leaving Astrid and Irena to themselves for a while, but not for too long.

Jakob and Colby were coming over to play with Irena that day and no amount of snow could keep those kids apart for too long. They were inseparable.

They were playing with Patches and Stormfly and a set of blocks Gobber had made Irena when he was bored one day in front of the fireplace. Astrid was watching them and copying a page of dragon facts from The Book of Dragons into a new book (class was cancelled). Duplicates were good ideas. As long as they didn't fall into the wrong hands, of course.

Patches was happily bounding after the string Jakob was pulling across the floor, Safira was curled in Irena's lap, Colby was trying the block tower he was making to not fall over.

Patches bounded a little too far and knocked over the blocks with a thump and a crash that startled her. She hissed and scampered under Astrid's chair. Colby sighed such a big sigh for a little boy that Astrid couldn't help but smile.

"Sorry," Jakob smiled sheepishly. "I'll help you fix it."

"Me too!" Irena agreed, grabbing a block. The children quickly got back to work on making a new tower.

"It should be a castle." Jakob said.

"What does a castle look like?" Irena asked curiously.

"It's got big towers! And shorter parts in the middle. They're real big."

"Mommy?" Irena asked. Astrid looked up. "Do Merida and Rapunzel and Anna and Elsa live in castles?"

"Yes. They all do. Not in the same one of course."

Irena smiled. "Do you think they're pretty?"

"I'm sure the castles are beautiful. Maybe we'll be able to see one sometime." Merida was adamant in having them come for a visit eventually. Especially after they had written her saying that that Astrid was pregnant.

Irena smiled brighter.

Jakob was watching Irena carefully the whole time, but quickly looked away when Irena came back to building.

"Is your tooth still wig-ly?" Colby asked Irena. He wasn't as shy as he used to be, especially around his best friends.

Irena nodded enthusiastically. "It's really wiggly now."

"I'm surprised it hasn't fallen out yet." Astrid chimed in.

"I've got two loose teeth." Jakob said proudly.

"Does it hurt?" Colby questioned, looking a bit frightened.

Jakob shook his head. He had lost a few teeth already. "Only at the start and end."

Colby nodded seriously. He wasn't even four yet. Irena was nearly five (very nearly. Her birthday and Astrid's were only a few days apart, it turned out) and Jakob was six and a half. Colby was definitely the baby.

Speaking of babies, Astrid's was being super active. Annoyingly active.

Eventually, the children grew tired of blocks.

"Mommy, can you tell us a story?" Irena asked sweetly after they had put the blocks away.

"A story? I'm not good at stories." Hiccup was better at stories, no contest.

"Please?" Irena asked.

"Please?" asked Jakob. Colby giggled.

"Alright," Astrid gave in. She closed both books. "What kind of story

do you want?" She was used to a variety of replies from Irena. She hadn't been on Berk for the Bewilderbeast or the Red Death incident, so her answers had a great range. Jakob was just a baby when the Red Death was a problem and Colby wasn't even a thought yet. Both boys were around for the Bewilderbeast (Colby's house was one of the many that had needed major repairs).

The kids shrugged.

After racking her brain, Astrid made a fool out of herself. "What about if I tell you about the time when I made a fool out of myself?"

The kids nodded eagerly.

She knew that was going to happen. "Okay, I was about Ingrid and Ben's age when the dragons started to live with us. It was Snoggletog and everyone was excited." Astrid then went on to tell them about the time she put exploding dragon eggs into people's houses.

The kids thought it was absolutely hilarious.

* * *

><p>"Hey Chief!" Eret called from Skullcrusher's back. "There's a ship a couple miles off shore headed this way."<p>

That was surprising. There had been no news from any tribe that anyone was coming. "Can you make out the crest?" Hiccup called back.

"There doesn't seem to be one. Although with all this snow it's hard to tell."

Even more unusual.

Toothless chirped at Hiccup. Hiccup mounted the dragon and clicked his prosthetic into place. "Come on, Toothless, let's check it out."

Toothless took off, joining Skullcrusher in the sky.

There was nothing that stood out more in a white-out blizzard than a black-as-night dragon.

There really was no crest on the sail at all, as far as Hiccup could tell. It wasn't just a fishing boat, it was too big, but not big enough to be a warship.

Toothless anxiously cooed. He didn't like the feeling that ship gave him.

"I don't like it either, bud." Hiccup replied, patting the dragon.

"What do you say we do?" Eret asked.

"I want every dragon rider to watch that ship." Immediate change from Hiccup to Chief Hiccup. Preferably from a cliff if you can manage, it's too windy and we don't need anyone getting hurt. If anything

changes, I want to know immediately."

"You got it, Chief." Eret nodded, turning Skullcrusher into the wind and flying off to get the twins, Snotlout, Fishlegs, Valka and anyone else he could find on short notice.

Toothless grumbled at the ship that was slowly growing in size.

"Who do you think it is, Toothless?" Hiccup asked.

Someone not good, thought Toothless.

* * *

><p>It was sometime<p>

It was sometime later, after Jakob and Colby had gone home, and Hiccup was on the ground, taking care of some business that had nothing to do with the unmarked ship sailing into port that was worrying him so much.

A shadow crossed over him.

"Hiccup!" Fishlegs yelled from Meatlug. "The ship docked."

"Thanks, Fishlegs." Hiccup said, getting on Toothless' back.

"You need back-up?" Snotlout asked.

"From a distance." Hiccup replied grimly. "We don't know what they want. I want every dragon grounded until further notice."

"You got it." Ruff replied. They all landed their dragons. Valka and Eret landed behind them.

Hiccup and Toothless took to the sky, soaring towards the docks.

They landed next some of the fisherman, who were looking perplexed.

"Who's that, Chief?" Mulch asked, looking at the ship.

"I don't know. Keep your distance. Please." Hiccup slipped off of Toothless, fixed his prosthetic and waited. Mulch and Bucket had left the area, the other dragon riders were far back, waiting.

Toothless growled at the boat. It smelled bad. It smelled _wrong_. It smelled oddly familiar. He didn't like it at all.

Hiccup put his hand on Toothless' snout. _"Easy_, bud."

The snow had let up some, but it was still coming down. It had left the world covered in a blanket of white.

The ship's small crew had stayed aboard, but someone had told the most important visitor that they had arrived.

Hiccup hoped somewhere in the back of his mind that this person was just lost and needed some help, even though the more logical part of

him knew that wasn't possible. A lost, goodnatured Viking would have been at the helm of the ship, apologize for coming, explain their situation, ask for directions and then probably eat dinner and the Great Hall and then be on their way. Not so mysterious.

A soft creak nearly echoed in the stillness. Toothless snarled lowly and crouched, ready to pounce, shoot, or fly at a second's notice. He was Alpha. He would protect Berk's dragons and their people at all costs, just as Hiccup would. He would only listen to Hiccup at a time like this. Hiccup was better with people and Toothless didn't smell any dragons. But he did still smell that strange odor, the one he didn't like.

Out of the shadow came a figure. A tallish, sort of broad figure.

"Hiccup, long time no see."

Hiccup's stomach dropped and he ran his free hand through his hair anxiously. It was cold and wet, like he was. Toothless snarled louder. Now he knew where that smell was from. It was an old memory, but a strong one.

"Dagur," Hiccup replied, trying to sound polite, but failing miserably. Hadn't they gotten rid of him?

"I heard about your father," Dagur said breezily, stepping onto solid ground. "What an unfortunate way to become chief."

Hiccup gritted his teeth, his hand still on the Night Fury's snout. "I've noticed."

"Look at you, all grown up." Dagur commented with a sly smile. "How've you been, old friend?"

Hiccup was fed up with this. He was freezing. He wanted to go home. He was done. "What do you want, Dagur?" he demanded.

Dagur laughed shortly. "Ah, yes, I'm sure you want the reason I'm here." he folded his hands behind his back diplomatically and walked forward, closer to Hiccup and Toothless. The dragon let out a low warning growl and smoke curled out of his nostrils. Hiccup eyed the other young man suspiciously. "Word around the Archipelago is that you have something of mine."

Hiccup sighed tiredly and rubbed his dragon's snout. "We've been over this, Dagur. Toothless is my dragon."

Dagur glared at Toothless, who growled again, before looking back to Hiccup. "It's not the dragon I'm after this time, Hiccup."

Then what did he want? Toothless growled low in his throat again. A deep, menacing growl.

Before Hiccup had time to ask, Dagur spoke again, a malicious glint in his eye.

"Where is my daughter?"

* * *

><p>:)**

22. Chapter 22

_**Hey! I'm back with an early update! I'm sorry for being so mean.
:P No quote today, I'll let you jump right in!**_

* * *

><p>*****WARNING:*****POSSIBLE
TRIGGERS!*******

* * *

><p>"What?" Hiccup demanded. He had a feeling he knew where this was
going. "You have a daughter? Really?"<p>

"Really," Dagur nodded firmly. Oh _no_.

"How-how old is she?"

"Almost five." Oh Thor, why?

But Dagur was only a year or two older than he was. He had a kid when
he was eighteen? He was _married_?

"You have a wife?"

"Had." Dagur corrected.

"She's dead?" Didn't Irena say both her parents died? What was
happening?

"No. She was a hindrance. Not worth it." Dagur shrugged. "Thought the
kid died. But I heard something about Berk's chief's adopted daughter
and I thought I'd come take a look."

This wasn't good. Hiccup kept his face straight. He was going to lie
to Valhalla and back if he had to. He wasn't about to let Dagur get
his hands on Irena again. She had been tortured enough.

That's the smell that still lingered faintly on Irena like a scar.
Dagur. Toothless snarled viscously. Like Hel was he going to let
Dagur hurt that little girl any more than he already had.

"I don't have a kid." Hiccup lied easily, shrugging. "They must have
gotten their facts mixed up. Astrid's pregnant though."

"Aw, cute." Dagur replied, a cruel smile tugging at his mouth. "Yes,
I heard about your wedding too. I'm sure she knows my daughter
too?"

"We don't have your little girl. I'm sorry." Hiccup didn't want him
anywhere near Irena. Ever. He didn't want Dagur near any child. Or
anyone else.

"Well," Dagur replied. "If that's the case, you wouldn't mind me
having a look around, would you?"

"Not at all," Hiccup smiled, though it hurt a little.

"Well," Dagur looked surprised. "Then I will."

"Be my guest." Hiccup said, running his hand through his hair as nonchalantly as he could manage. He didn't want to seem like he was hiding something. "I'd come with you, but I have to check on the new dragons and-"

"That's fine." Dagur interrupted, still looking menacing. "I'm sure I can find my way."

"Okay," Hiccup replied, never once taking his hand off of a snarling Toothless' head. "I'll probably be around here, if you need me. Or something."

Dagur just grinned that evil grin of his and strolled off, glaring at Toothless and the other dragons as he passed. As soon as he was far enough away, Hiccup knelt next to Toothless and stroked the dragon's neck, eyes closed.

Toothless' eyes got big again and he nuzzled against Hiccup's shoulder, whining. "It's okay, bud. She's gonna be okay. We can't go with him. He'd know something's up. I'll figure it out, Toothless. It'll be alright."

"What can we do, Hiccup?" Fishlegs questioned quietly.

Hiccup looked up, arms still around Toothless, who was sniffing towards the ship and its crew now. The little crew looked afraid.

The riders looked nervous. Dagur's presence on the island was a Chief matter, but wanting Irena was a family matter. They would do whatever Hiccup wanted them to do. For the island and their mismatched family.

Hiccup sighed. "Ruff, Tuff, take the crew off the ship and keep them away from Dagur at all costs."

"You got it." Tuff replied, sliding off the Zippleback along with Ruff.

"Snotlout, Eret, and Fishlegs, follow Dagur. On foot. Quietly. The moment he's a threat to anyone, I want him disarmed. I'll catch up."

They nodded and slipped off their dragons, heading in Dagur's direction."

"And... Mom?"

Cloudjumper shook his head. Valka was not anywhere to be seen.

"She went to tell Astrid, I think." Ruff told Hiccup, grabbing one of the frightened crew member's arms.

"Good," That's what he was going to tell her to do. Hiccup sighed and stood up. He looked at Toothless, anxiously sniffing towards the

boat.

Now that Dagur was gone, a different scent had took over the dragon's nostrils. And it wasn't the dirty crew that the twins were dragging off the ship.

"What's wrong, bud?" Hiccup asked, feeling much older than twenty one.

Toothless took that as permission to board the ship and find the scent.

"_Toothless_!" Hiccup cried out, exasperated. He didn't have time for this. He followed the dragon.

Toothless was not a tracking dragon, but he still had a better nose than his human. There was a scent- a person, down near the bottom of the ship. And he wanted to find them.

"Toothless, come on." Hiccup tried to catch up to his dragon. "We have to go see if Irena's alr-"

Toothless stopped at a small doorway and barked, tail flicking.

"Toothless?" a shocked, feminine voice asked in a hoarse whisper. Toothless grumbled.

"What?" Hiccup asked himself, tripping down the hallway (a metal leg and waves under a ship don't mix well, by the way). Who was down there? He stopped next to Toothless. There, sitting with her legs held to her chest in the corner of the room, was a smallish brunette with rosy cheeks. "_Kristianna_"

"Hiccup," she said quietly, sounding relieved. Her hair was disheveled and tangled. Her cheeks were still pink, but she looked a lot less cheerful than she had been when he first met her on her home island when he was off exploring before the wedding. How long had she been on this ship? Why was she here?

"Why are you here?" Hiccup asked, slipping into the doorway. Toothless followed.

"He was going around asking if anyone had seen or heard of a little girl named Irena. I didn't want to tell him anything, but I'm not a very good liar." she looked away from him, ashamed. "But he threatened my sisters and I- I'm sorry."

Hiccup shook his head slowly. "Don't apologize. It's okay." It was all his fault she was here, in a roundabout sort of way. And even though Dagur kidnapped her, he couldn't help feeling a little guilty.

Why did Dagur want Irena so badly? He couldn't love her. By the way he treated her it was impossible that she was little more than an object to bully in his eyes. Why did he take Kristianna? She told him what he wanted to know! He had to stop Dagur from hurting anyone ever again. He had to lock him up. He had to.

But first he had to get Kristianna off this ship.

Toothless cooed softly next to Kristianna, his anger at Dagur subsided for the moment. She had been lonely for a while. The dragon could sense it. Kristianna smiled a bit and reached out to rub him.

That's when Hiccup saw the ropes tied to her wrists and to metal pieces the wall.

He balled his hands into fists and scowled. "He tied you up?" Did he really think she was going to swim away? He threatened her family. She wasn't a stupid girl.

"Yeah," Kristianna looked up at him. She smiled weakly, hand still on Toothless. "They're not all that bad. I'm alright. Really."

Hiccup reached down and grabbed one of her hands, pushing the rope away from where it lay. She cringed. The skin under the rope was red and raw. Not that bad, his left leg.

"How are your sisters?" Hiccup asked, unhooking Inferno from his flight suit with one hand, still holding Kristianna's hand.

"Fine..." her face lit up at the thought of her family. "Brenna can walk on her own now. It's really cute. What is that?"

"Fire sword," Hiccup explained, pressing the button, making the blade spark to life and the girl's face light up even more in awe (Toothless got a bit sucked into the sight of the fire, but quickly shook himself out of it). "Nightmare saliva and Zippleback gas." he cut the rope about four inches from her skin. She only felt the heat. "Comes in handy. Other hand please."

"I can see that." Kristianna raised her other hand. "Did you make it?"

"Yeah," Hiccup said, slicing through the other rope with ease. The frayed edges smoldered for a moment before they died out. He put his sword away and grabbed her other hand. "Can you stand?"

She shrugged. "It's been awhile."

Too long of a while. "Well, I'll help you. Toothless too, right bud?"

Toothless warbled and nosed her gently from the back as Hiccup pulled her up onto her shaky legs. She smiled.

"Good, now the bigger question is: Can you walk?"

She took a wobbly step towards him, but she kept herself upright.

"Alright, good. I'm going to take you to the Healer. She'll finish with the ropes and put something on your wrists."

"Thank you,"

"And I'll write your dad as soon as I can to let him know you're

safe."

"Okay," a larger wave hit the ship and she stumbled into Hiccup.
"Sorry," she said sheepishly. "I know you need to find your little girl."

"No problem..." Hiccup glanced at Toothless. This really was taking longer than he'd have liked. "I have an idea."

After Kristianna was settled on Toothless, they set off on a brisk pace towards the Healer's Hut.

"This is probably a bad time to ask, but how's your wife? Astrid, right?" Kristianna asked.

"She's good. A little bit nauseated, but good." Hiccup replied.

"What-?" His casual tone surprised her and then she figured it out.
"Oh, she's pregnant?"

"Yeah,"

"You're happy, I hope?"

"Very. Also a little bit nervous."

"You'll be fine." Kristianna replied. "And congratulations."

"Thank you." By this time, they were outside of the Healer's Hut.
Hiccup helped her off Toothless and knocked on the door.

"How many times do I have to tell you that you don't have to knock, Chief?" the Healer asked before she even opened the door.

Hiccup chuckled nervously. "Always,"

The Healer opened the door with a smile. She was a kindly looking woman. "Since you were a little boy. What can I help you with?"

"My friend here needs some help." Hiccup gestured towards Kristianna, who waved meekly, the bit of rope swinging.

The Healer tufted and took Kristianna by the hand. "She'll be in good hands, Hiccup."

"Thanks, see you later." Hiccup said to both of them before jogging off, Toothless at his heels.

* * *

><p>"Come in," Astrid called to the knocker at the front door. She was sitting at the table with Irena, paper spread out in front of them. Irena was practicing writing longer sentences.<p>

Valka entered the house.

"Toothless likes to eat fish." Astrid told Irena, standing up. Irena smiled at Valka before scratching out the sentence with her pencil.

"I need to speak to you, Astrid." Valka said.

Astrid rubbed the slight curve of her abdomen absently. "What's wrong?"

"Someone's here. For Irena." Valka said quietly. Irena did perk up at her name, though.

"Who?" Astrid asked, instantly concerned.

"I believe his name is Dagur."

Irena dropped her pencil. Valka and Astrid turned to the little girl who looked terrified.

"What's wrong, little one?" Astrid asked, going to the little girl and stroking her hair. She hated the person with that name, but how could Irena?

Irena leaned on Astrid, tears brimming in her eyes. "That's my daddy." she whispered quietly. Her real daddy. The one that hurt her and yelled at her and her mother. The one that was mean to dragons.

"_No_," Astrid whispered, tangling her fingers in the little girl's hair. Irena was too sweet to be related to Dagur, too kind, too beautiful. And he hurt her. Astrid's stomach felt like ice. "It's okay, Irena. It's going to be okay."

"You should take her somewhere and hide." Valka said, nervously. Irena was her granddaughter now. She loved her very much. And if anyone were to hurt her, it wouldn't be pretty.

Astrid nodded, feeling tired and frightened and... old. "Come on, little one. We'll go to the cove, he won't find us there."

Irena slipped from the chair, shaking a bit. She scratched at the scar on her arm earnestly. Weren't her parents dead? The fire was massive and so, so hot. Her head hurt a little.

"Daddy won't let him come anywhere near you, Irena. Neither will I." Astrid said, pulling Irena's cloak around the little girl's trembling shoulders. "It'll be okay."

Irena sniffled and took Astrid's hand. Months ago, she would have asked her to be carried. But Astrid was going to have a baby in a few months and Irena didn't know if Astrid was allowed to carry her.

"Let's go," Astrid pulled on Irena's hand gently. "You should go, Valka. He'll ask you questions if he finds you. And he gets pretty nasty when he doesn't get what he wants."

Valka nodded and went out the door, followed by Irena and Astrid. They split up. Valka headed back towards the docks and Astrid and Irena took the long way to the cove, telling Stormfly not to follow them. A dragon was an obvious 'I'm here' sign.

But they didn't get too far.

Irena screamed when she felt a tug on her cloak from behind. Astrid whipped around, only to become face to face with a person she hoped she'd never see again.

"I see you have exactly who I'm looking for." Dagur sneered, pulling Irena's hand from Astrid's roughly and tugging the girl towards him. Irena struggled away from him, whimpering, but Dagur only held her wrist harder. Irena looked up to Astrid pitifully.

"Let her go." Astrid demanded, balling her hands into fists.

"Or what? You'll sick your dragon on me?" Dagur laughed. "She's my daughter." Dagur tugged Irena off balance and the little girl fell onto the ground, crying.

"No one that hurts a child should claim to be a parent." Astrid said, glaring at Dagur.

"What gives you the right to tell me what a parent should do?" Dagur asked cruelly, stepping over his daughter and advancing on Astrid, backing her against a tree. Irena crawled a good distance away and wiped at her eyes.

Astrid didn't answer. "I've taken care of the little girl you _could_ have_ loved for months now. She's perfectly sweet and nice and she's so well behaved. You don't _deserve_ a child like her. I feel bad for whoever her mother is. I feel bad for whoever you come in contact with. You're a horrible human being."

"I wouldn't challenge me, if I were you." Dagur smiled menacingly, reaching down to his side. He drew a knife from a small holder and held it up. It glinted in the sun.

Astrid looked him dead in the eyes. She was determined not to show any fear. If she wasn't pregnant, he'd be curled on the ground like a infant already, crying for his mommy. But she was pregnant. And she'd never forgive herself if something happened to the baby on her account. She was going to try to outsmart him, take him down with her wits rather than her fists.

But anyone holding a knife an arm's length away was frightening.

"I'm not sure your husband would take too kindly to finding his pregnant wife bleeding out on the forest floor." Dagur spun the weapon in his fingers, never looking away from her. "Just let me take the girl and I'll leave you alone. You can go run into Hiccup's arms and cry."

"Like Hel am I letting you take her. You've hurt her enough, you-you-ooh, you're lucky I don't swear in front of kids." she spat, fire in her eyes.

"If you don't cooperate..." Dagur angled the knife downwards, towards the small swell of her stomach. Astrid bit her lip hard. "I'll do it."

He wouldn't dare. The moment Hiccup got his hands on him for coming, he'd be incapacitated. He had to know Hiccup was very protective of

the island, its people and dragons, and especially her and his mother and Irena. He lovingly called the three of them his favorite ladies (which made Irena blush and giggle in that endearing way she did whenever she was complimented. She thought she was too little to be a 'lady', but Hiccup told her otherwise).

"You're a _coward_." Astrid growled.

"Am I?" Dagur grinned evilly.

"Only a coward would hurt a child. Someone who can't fight back. You're nothing but a bully. It's about time you grew up." The venom in Astrid's voice was unmistakable.

"Hm," Dagur feigned thoughtfulness before quickly moved the knife and sliced her arm.

It wasn't a very sharp knife, which would make it sting like a paper cut at first. No, this knife had a jagged edge. And it hurt.

Damn, did it hurt.

It wasn't too deep, though. Astrid knew it wasn't. One of her dearest friend's had sharp spines and spikes down her back. She was used to cuts.

It was going to bleed quite a bit though.

And scar.

But she wasn't about to show him that she was in pain. She glared at him. Dagur's mouth only further twisted into a cruel smile.

"Stop!" shouted a watery, tiny voice.

Astrid looked to Irena, who had pushed herself to her knees. She looked scared. And angry.

Dagur turned around, and Astrid saw the malice in his eyes.

"What?" he demanded fiercely.

"Stop it! Stop!" Irena's eyes were too bright and her lip quivered ever so slightly. "Don't do that!"

Irena was standing up for her.

Astrid had a feeling she had never stood up for herself.

"Shut up, you little brat."

"I'm_ not_ a brat." Irena said bravely, little hands trembling. She looked younger than she was and older at the same time.

"You _are_ a brat. And you_ will_ learn your place."

"Don't you touch her." Astrid snapped.

"She learned this from you! You don't know your place either. You are a woman."

"So?" Astrid narrowed her eyes. The wound on her arm was still spilling a sticky crimson onto her skin.

"Women are supposed to sew and cook and clean and keep their mouths _shut_." Dagur growled.

He rounded on Irena, who fell back on her rear, trembling.

"You are a girl, a child. I am your father. You will do what I say. And you will _listen_ to me." Dagur sneered. He put the knife away and raised his hand to Irena, who fell back on her bottom and squeezed her little eyes shut.

It was the position of a girl who had been beaten before.

Who was used to it.

Who knew she couldn't fight back.

Who knew what was coming.

Who thought she was worthless.

She didn't even look scared anymore.

She was just waiting.

She was prepared.

And it was the most heartbreaking thing Astrid had ever seen.

No child should ever have to look like that.

They promised her she'd never get hurt again.

And while they were many things, a liar wasn't one of them.

She was just about to dart forward to try and stop him, when a deeper, accented voice cut her off.

"Don't touch her." Eret spat, stepping out of the trees. Astrid sighed in relief and Irena opened her eyes. Eret was bigger than Dagur.

Fishlegs and Snotlout joined Eret, all looking ready to pin Dagur to the ground.

Dagur turned around. "And who are _you_?"

"A friend of the chief. And I know him well enough to tell you to back off."

Dagur chuckled. "Yeah, right. What'll he do, train a dragon?"

"Not a chance." Hiccup said, stepping out of the trees.

Toothless came out next to him, smoke curling out of his nostrils. He was snarling. Astrid and Irena were in trouble and he loved them dearly. _No one would hurt them._ The faint scent of blood wafting

from his rider's mate only infuriated him more. He was glowing his protective Alpha blue and he was prepared to fight for his family.

"I would recommend you back away." Hiccup told Dagur. "Now,"

"And if I don't?"

Hiccup hooked his thumb at Toothless, looking more serious than Astrid had ever seen. "Then you'll have to deal with an angry Night Fury. And an angry father."

* * *

><p>AN: Well, another cliffy. Huh. Would you look at that? :)**_

**I promise everything that's a bit cloudy now will be explained in the coming chapters. This is really testing my writing skills and I'm really excited to move on to harder, more challenging scenes such as the next chapter!**

_**Please leave a review if you can! They are greatly appreciated!**__**Enjoy your Thanksgiving dinners on Thursday (if you live in the U.S!)**_

**See you next week!**

23. Chapter 23

**Short(ish) chapter! Sorry! But it's an early update (long weekend plus boring family holiday equals lots of writing time)**

* * *

><p>No quote again! Jump right in!_

* * *

><p>"Like you could take me down." Dagur sneered at Hiccup. "Look at you."<p>

Hiccup took Inferno out of his pocket for the second time that day and flicked it on, this time for an entirely different reason. "It's been a few years since the last time we saw each other."

"But you haven't changed that much." Dagur smiled cruelly. "Now, if you just hand your 'precious little girl' back to her real father, I'll be on my way."

"Like Hel," Hiccup replied, eyes narrow. The word stung on his tongue. He never swore. He didn't like to. He didn't really see a point in it.

Dagur chuckled and pulled his knife back out.

"Eret, take Astrid and Irena away from here. Now." Hiccup commanded. "Snotlout, Fishlegs, go with them. Toothless and I can take care of this."

Eret had already plucked a very shaken up Irena from the ground. Fishlegs had made a makeshift bandage for the gash on her arm.

The gash on her arm.

Not only had he _frightened Irena to death_, he had also wounded Astrid. Hiccup felt an unknown fury rise inside of him, it made his heart beat a bit too fast and his head to hurt a bit.

"Are you sure?" Snotlout asked in shock, surprised that his cousin would take this on by himself.

Hiccup was absolutely enraged. So was his faithful dragon who was still snarling. This was _his family_, his wife and children. And _no one_ would ever hurt them again. "Absolutely,"

"Alright," Snotlout shrugged.

The minute the group left the clearing, Toothless gave an almighty roar that scared the birds right out of their trees.

The fire sword clanged with Dagur's knife.

Dagur wasn't leaving without Irena and Hiccup had no intentions of letting her go.

* * *

><p>Irena was shaking still, tucked in Astrid's arms in the Healer's hut.<p>

Astrid's arm had been taken care of. Irena only got a scrape from when she fell. They were staying for a while until the Healer knew for sure that blood loss did not affect Astrid at all (any other time, Astrid would have left, but there was a tiny human in her that depended on her being healthy now). Stormfly was clucking anxiously outside.

Occasionally, the familiar din of a Night Fury's roar would rumble in their ears. Once or twice the whining of a plasma blast.

Hiccup was going to be just fine as long as Toothless was around, she knew that.

Thank the gods for them showing up when they had.

Thank the gods for them in general.

"It's going to be alright, little one." Astrid promised the trembling little figure in her arms. Hiccup wouldn't let Dagur win. Not when they were involved. Astrid knew that. And if something happened to Hiccup, Toothless would be after Dagur in cold blood.

Irena, wrapped in a thick blanket (she wasn't cold, but she liked being cuddled in a blanket, they hoped it'd help her relax some) scratched at the scar on her arm and put her thumb in her mouth, only to jump in surprise.

"What's the matter?" Astrid asked, concerned.

Irena held out her hand. There, in the palm of it, lay a single baby tooth.

"You lost your tooth!" Astrid said, smiling. Trying to distract Irena from her fears. "Look at that. I knew something good would happen today."

Irena giggled despite the metallic blood taste in her mouth that she hated and that made her tummy churn and the sound from outside.

The Healer bustled into the room. "Did I hear someone lost a tooth?"

Irena nodded.

"Well, that means your growing up, doesn't it? Now come here, let's wash your mouth out and your tooth off, shall we?" Irena slipped out of the blanket and off Astrid's lap and over to the Healer.

"She's adorable," said a quiet voice.

Astrid looked over. Kristianna was sitting on the other side of the room, her wrists cleaned and bandaged. They had spoken some when the Healer was tending to Astrid's arm wound (a sobbing, anxious Irena had been put in another room because blood made her queasy). Astrid knew Kristianna knew Hiccup (Hiccup had recounted his night on Dreki to Astrid and Irena). She also knew Hiccup had rescued her.

"We're very lucky," Astrid replied. The baby moved quickly and Astrid scowled at her stomach. "Calm down, you."

Kristianna smiled in agreement. "You are." She meant more than Irena. She meant being married and being pregnant. Something, no matter how badly she wanted to, she could never do. At least not for a few more years. Her sisters needed her. Sadly, by the time Brenna (the baby) was old enough to leave, she would be in her late twenties. That was older than most men wanted to marry. Out of all the reasons she could be angry over her mother's death, that was one of the most petty. And she hated herself for it.

"I-I really am sorry I told him." Kristianna told Astrid shyly, looking down.

"It's alright. You didn't really have a choice. He probably would have found her eventually." Astrid smiled. She'd done some pretty unintentionally stupid things herself. "We're not mad at you, if that's what you think."

Kristianna looked up, almost surprised.

"It's okay, it really is. Don't blame yourself."

Kristianna was about to open her mouth to reply, but the startlingly long stretch of silence from outside interrupted her. Stormfly crooned anxiously.

No roars. No whines.

Just silence.

Was it over?

Kristianna, Astrid, and the Healer exchanged worried glances.

Irena darted back into the safety of Astrid's arms.

"It's okay, I'm sure everything's okay, Irena." Astrid rubbed the little girl's back.

"Astrid, perhaps you should take Irena home. She might be more comfortable there." the Healer said quietly, coming over and stroking Irena's hair. "I could send one of the boys up there with you if you want. Just-just in case."

Astrid nodded and then looked to Kristianna. "Would you like to come with us?"

"I-Uh, yeah, okay." Kristianna stood up and looked down at Irena. "Do you want me to carry her for you? I've got little sisters. I'm used to it."

"That'd be great, thank you."

Kristianna took Irena into her arms, making the little girl panic a little. She didn't want to go anywhere without Astrid. Astrid rubbed her arm, assuring her that she was there and that everything was alright.

She hoped it was alright.

* * *

><p>It was about an hour after they got home before they heard anything.<p>

Kristianna and Astrid were talking quietly, Irena was snuggled into Astrid's side, Safira purring in her lap.

Stormfly was right outside the door, guarding it.

There was a muffled voice outside and Stormfly squawked. Irena buried her face in Astrid's side. Safira jumped up to the back of the chair. Patches hissed from wherever she was hiding.

The door squeaked open.

Nothing.

And then dragon claws.

And then slightly uneven footsteps.

Hiccup.

Astrid sighed in relief.

Hiccup certainly didn't look well. His hair was even more messed up than usual. He looked tired. There was a burn on his left hand, a scrape on his face. He was a bit dirty. And there was lingering anger

in his eyes.

Irena peeked and when she saw Hiccup she untangled herself from Astrid and ran to him.

He crouched down and caught her in a tight hug. All the anger was gone instantly.

Irena wound her arms around his neck. "Daddy, Daddy, Daddy," she repeated, almost as if she was trying to convince herself that Hiccup was real.

"It's okay," Hiccup promised before kissing the top of Irena's head. "It's okay, I've got you. He can't hurt you anymore. It's all over, little one. It's all over. I promise."

Toothless nuzzled Irena from behind and gave her a lick. He was back to his normal docile nature, an oversized house cat. Everything was okay now.

After a few moments, Hiccup stood up, still holding Irena who was still cuddled against him.

"You got him?" Astrid asked, standing up, even though she already knew the answer.

"Took a while, but we got him. He won't be going anywhere any time soon thanks to Toothless." Hiccup promised, dropping a kiss on her cheek before tracing his thumb over the bandage on her arm. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine." Astrid waved her hand dismissively and then scratched Toothless on the head. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine." Hiccup shrugged.

"You don't look fine." Astrid crossed her arms. She hated when he did that.

"Astrid, I'm fine." he looked to Kristianna. "How about you?"

"I'm okay," the younger girl smiled tentatively.

It turns out Hiccup wasn't quite done. After Toothless had pinned Dagur to the ground, he had been disoriented by a Alpha-sized roar and then dragged to the scarcely used dungeon. But Hiccup had some things he wanted to know and to make sure he got those answers, Toothless was coming with him to question Dagur later. After Irena was asleep.

But until then, Hiccup wrote to Kristianna's father telling her where she was and that she was alright (Irena didn't leave his side the entire night, so writing was a little hard with an almost five year old in his lap). As it turns out, Kristianna and Astrid got along quite well with each other and became friends quickly.

It was a while after dinner when Irena was tucked in and asleep after a bath when Hiccup and Toothless left again.

Astrid bit her lip in worry as they left even though she knew there

was no way they could get hurt. Sometimes Astrid felt she worried more about Hiccup than he did about her (and that was a lot because that's just how he was).

Astrid set Kristianna up in the empty room next to Irena's (That was one good thing about a chief's house. There were several rooms that could eventually be a child's room, but until then, they served well as spare rooms for guests), but had a hard time falling asleep herself.

It was very, very late when Toothless bounded into the room. He gave Astrid a good night nuzzle and she scratched him behind his ear flaps before he trotted into Irena's room to curl up at the end of her bed. He wanted to reassure her that she was safe.

Hiccup exhaustedly stumbled into the room. He looked awful. But it also looked like there was something troubling him.

Astrid sat up quickly. "What's wrong?" she asked, studying her husband's face.

He just ran his hand through his hair tiredly and shook his head.

"Hiccup?"

He sighed. "Her mother's alive, Astrid. Her mother's alive and I know where she is."

* * *

><p>AN: Hello friends! I know this chapter was short (and sort of anticlimactic, but this isn't the end, folks) and I'm sorry, but next chapter will probably be longer. All I know for sure is that it'll be more emotionally driven for sure. **_

This is kind of important: I don't mean to sound snippy when I say this, but my goal is to update weekly. Usually on Wednesdays. But if something comes up or I finish a chapter early, I'll post it early (I want to share a chapter with you as soon as I can, of course. I don't like to sit on chapters) or (if I have to) late. I am a teenager. I have essays to write, projects to do, AP tests to prepare for, family commitments, and writer's block on occasion. I wish I could drop everything and update this story with 1,000-3,000 words everyday, but I can't. I'm sorry. I'd like to get this across now because my sister's baby is due in a few weeks and she can go into labor at any time now so updates may get wonky in the near future.

**What do you think Hiccup and Astrid will do now that they know where Irena's mother is? **

**As always, thank you all so much for reading and reviewing. I've had people everywhere from Greece to Indonesia, Ireland, Egypt, Iceland, Hungary, and Malaysia (and so much more!) see this story and that's so amazing to me! Thank you to all! You're all so kind in your reviews, too. I'm thrilled that you guys like this story so much.**

_**Please review if you can! I really, really do read each and every one and I appreciate them so much! I wish I could answer them all

individually (I'll be working on that for the sequel, actually).

**_

**See you soon and I hope your first few days of December are fabulous just like you all!**

**~Pink**

24. Chapter 24

**Sorry for the late update, but I've been sick (with an 102 degree fever, actually) and my sister had her baby, so I couldn't finish when I wanted to! This chapter is super long though! Enjoy!**

* * *

><p>No quote, dive right in!_

* * *

><p>"Her mother's alive?" Astrid questioned. "Irena's mother?"<p>

"Yes, Irena's mother." Hiccup snapped irritably. "Who else could I be talking about?"

Astrid shot him a look. "Don't get snippy with me, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the third. I wasn't there, remember?"

"I... He slumped a bit and ran his hand through his hair for the umpteenth time that day. "I know, sorry. It's a lot to take in in a few hours."

"Agreed," Astrid knew he was exhausted, so she didn't want to agitate him any more than he already was. "Sit,"

He sat next to her on the bed. She started picking at his hair.

"Stop that,"

"Only if you promise to comb it in the morning."

"Okay, Mom. I'll comb it."

She narrowed her eyes at him. He had the decency to look sheepish, at least. Ever since Irena came into their lives and especially since they found out about the baby, Astrid had become very mothering. Which, of course, was good for Irena. Their friends had a problem with it, but Hiccup got most of it. If it wasn't "comb your hair", it was "fix your shirt", or "make sure your hands are clean", or even "don't slouch" (which was Valka's favorite one to hear. She laughed every time).

"I'll let that one go only because you're tired." Astrid said, snuggling against him. "Now, back to Irena's mother."

"Dagur told me where she is."

"Can I take a wild guess and say Beserker Island?"

"No, actually. He says he hasn't been there in years."

"Huh?"

"He left it to his older cousin because, apparently, they wanted nothing to do with trying to train dragons. He found Irena's mother and took her to Sola, which is a tiny little island south of here, very south, which is why I couldn't find it." Hiccup explained, absently playing with Astrid's hair. His other hand was lightly on her midsection. The baby was moving like crazy (as usual), but he couldn't feel it. Not yet.

"He told you all that?"

"He didn't really have a choice. Toothless was snarling in the corner, Ruff was making sure he wouldn't actually attack, Eret, Snotlout, and Tuff were watching him, plus Dagur's not exactly in tip top shape at the moment. So yes he told me all that and Fishlegs wrote it all down."

"But Irena told us her parents were both dead. I'm confused."

"He said that there was a big fire on Sola and it pretty much destroyed the entire village--"

"Rouge dragon?" Astrid interrupted.

"Scared, caged dragon, I think. It doesn't seem like they were very nice to dragons. Anyway, people were evacuating on little boats and someone dropped Irena into one to wait for her mother, but while she was trying to get to Irena, the rope snapped, or burned, or something, and Irena sailed out alone into a strong current that carried her to where I found her, I guess. Irena must have just assumed her parents died in the fire."

"Didn't they look for her?"

"Dagur wouldn't let anyone go look for her once they had discover her missing on the island they had fled to. He forbade her mother from going to look. Of course, he had purposely left Irena's mother behind on the island, but she was saved in the very last boat that left."

"He wanted her to die?"

"I think so. He told me many times she wasn't worth anything to him." Hiccup spat. He couldn't comprehend how someone could be so heartless.

"That's terrible." Astrid whispered. It was terrible. Dagur was a terrible person.

"After he told everyone not to look for Irena, he left to find her himself."

"I don't even want to know why." A thousand things ran through Astrid's mind. And all of them made her feel sick. "I hate him."

"So do I." Hate was a strong word and a strong feeling, but after what Dagur had done, he deserved to be hated.

"What's her name?" Astrid asked after a few beats of silence.

"Irena's mother?"

Astrid nodded against him.

"Cassia,"

That was pretty. "And she's okay?"

"I believe so."

"...we have to take Irena to see her, Babe."

"I was, I was afraid you'd say that." Hiccup sighed.

"Don't tell me you weren't going to let them see each other!"

"No! They should see each other."

"Good,"

"It's just... I," he sighed heavily. "What if Irena doesn't want us anymore?"

There it is. That was what was really bothering him.

Astrid sat up again. "You know she loves you."

"Yeah, but I'm sure she loves her mother too. And she will probably want to go back to her and we might not ever see her again."

"I don't think she wouldn't want to see you. She loves you too much, Hiccup."

"But what if she doesn't want to? Or what if her mother won't let her?"

"We'll cross that bridge when we get to it, okay?" Astrid said, squeezing his hand. She was worried Irena might not want to see them as well, but it was obviously affecting him more.

"I can't lose someone else I love, Astrid." he said quietly.

"You won't." she replied, side-hugging him.

He rested his head on top of hers and swallowed hard. "I hope you're right."

* * *

><p>Two days after Dagur had been locked up, Hiccup, Astrid, and Irena were headed to Frid to visit Irena's mother (a chief just can't get up and leave).<p>

Hiccup left Snotlout and Fishlegs jointly in charge of the people and

his mother in charge of the dragons (Eret usually would have been in charge of the people, but Hiccup had introduced him to Kristianna and gave him the job of showing her around under the excuse of getting her used to moving again).

"Where are we going?" Irena asked Hiccup nervously, messing with the sleeves of her dress.

"Somewhere," he replied casually, looking over the map again. They probably could have told her, but her reaction at seeing her mother was all they would need. If Irena was afraid because it wasn't safe, they'd take her right home. "I wouldn't take you anywhere bad, I promise."

"Can Safira come?"

"I'm afraid not, little one. It's a long flight and we don't want her curiosity getting the best of her. We might lose her."

Irena nodded and thought for a moment before asking, "Can I bring Kaida?"

"Of course you can."

Irena smiled and darted off to her room to get her dragon toy.

Astrid was outside, making sure Stormfly and Toothless were aware of what was going on.

Irena came back in quickly, holding her toy tight to her chest. She didn't like to be alone for long (if she fell asleep before bedtime, that was the easiest way to get her own room) since Dagur made his grand reappearance.

Hiccup looked down at her and smiled. "Ready?"

Irena nodded and held her arms up.

Hiccup picked her up more than happily and kissed her temple. "Alright, let's get this show on the... in the..." he shook his head and Irena giggled. "I've never been good at expressions. Let's just, get these dragons in the sky, I guess."

Once outside, Hiccup asked Irena, "Any dragon preference, little one?"

Irena pointed at Toothless without hesitation. As much as she loved Astrid, she wanted to stay with her daddy.

"Okay, looks like you're coming with me then."

"Why don't you put Kaida in the bag on Toothless' saddle so you don't drop her?" Astrid suggested.

"Okay!" Irena said.

"Hiccup," Gobber's voice carried over to them as he walked toward them. Hiccup looked to him. "Your, Uh, special guest isn't being very cooperative."

Hiccup sighed and put Irena down. "Stay with Mommy, okay? Toothless and I will be right back."

Irena nodded and slipped next to Astrid (who was in front of Stormfly), who gently put her hand on the back of the little girl's head. Irena looked up at her worriedly. She wasn't stupid, she knew Gobber meant her real daddy.

"I'll be back," Hiccup said to Astrid.

Astrid nodded. "Be careful,"

"Always." he promised. He turned to Toothless. "Come on, bud."

* * *

><p>"How long are you going to keep me here?" Dagur demanded the minute Hiccup and Toothless came in. Toothless made himself look as big and intimidating as he could. His eyes were glued to the man in front of him, watching every move.<p>

"As little time as possible. But don't think I'm just going to let you go." Hiccup said in a very business-like fashion, cool and to the point. Dagur didn't deserve sympathy or emotion. "There is no Archipelago law against child abuse unfortunately, and it didn't happen on my island, so technically I can't hold you for that, though I'd like to. But, considering you hurt Astrid, who happens to be my wife, I can hold you accountable under Archipelago law for attacking the Chieftess. I'm not sure how familiar with that law you are, but it's not a pretty consequence. So, yeah, there's that. I don't know where I'm sending you after this, but I want you as far away from Irena as possible without throwing you off the end of the world. I can't deal with you now, however, I've got family business to attend to. I have given the guards orders restrain you if necessary."

The guards had dragons too, a Monstrous Nightmare was at one end of the dungeon, a Raincutter at the other. They wouldn't let him out of their sight.

"I hope for your sake that you don't need restraining."

"What gives you the right to-"

"Imprison you? Punish you?" Hiccup shrugged. He wasn't used to being so indifferent, it bothered him. By nature he was a very sympathetic person with open emotions, but he was learning quickly to shut that part down while he was dealing with business. "Easy. If you hurt my village, that's one thing. But you hurt my family, and that's something completely different."

"You're insane!"

"I'm insane? Have you seen yourself?" Despite all his efforts, Hiccup had a hard time controlling the sharp, sarcastic, and witty comments from his professional life.

Dagur glowered, but didn't say a word.

"Let's go, bud." Hiccup said to Toothless.

Toothless growled at Dagur once for good measure before bounding after Hiccup. He was itching for a nice, long fly.

"Everything okay?" Astrid asked Hiccup when he and Toothless came back.

"Should be fine now," Hiccup assured, he smiled at Irena. "Everything set?"

"Yup," Astrid promised.

"Alright," Hiccup replied. Irena came over to him and he picked her up and put her on Toothless' saddle (her toy was safely tucked away). "Are you sure you want to-"

"Hiccup, I'm fine." Astrid told him, getting into Stormfly's saddle. "I'm not an invalid, I'm pregnant, for Thor's sake. There's a difference."

"I know, but, I don't want you getting hurt. Or falling off or anything. And-"

"You don't have to be so protective, Hiccup."

He shrugged. "Sorry, I can't really help it."

"I know, and you're sweet. But I'll be fine."

He and Toothless looked at her, not exactly convinced.

"Here, since you're so worried, I'll cut you a deal." Astrid began. "This is the last long flight, okay? I can do little things after this up until I'm huge and the baby's born. Does that sound acceptable?" She was only four and months pregnant anyway. She wasn't going to burst or anything.

"Astrid, I just don't want anything to happen to you."

"I know, I'm in good hands though. Er, make that talons, right girl?" she scratched the Nadder's neck.

Stormfly chirped in agreement.

Hiccup sighed. "Okay, deal. Just be careful."

She smiled. "Always,"

Hiccup got on Toothless' saddle and fit his prosthetic into place. It clicked securely and he made the necessary first adjustment of the dragon's tail fin. He hadn't had time to make Irena some kind of harness, but he hoped just holding her tightly would be enough.

Irena looked over anxiously at Astrid and then up at Hiccup. "Where are we going?"

"It's a surprise," Astrid replied simply.

A surprise I hope we don't lose you too. Hiccup thought.

* * *

><p>The had been flying for upwards of four hours and Irena was quickly falling asleep (the motion of Toothless flying was repetitive and calming to her, sort of like when a baby gets rocked to sleep).<p>

It was hard to have a conversation without shouting, though, so Hiccup and Astrid felt a little bad about their need for a louder-than-usual conversation.

Finally, _finally_, *_finally_*, they saw land. The land they were looking for.

Hopefully this village was friendly.

Hiccup and Astrid slowed their dragons down and told them they were landing on that island.

The deceleration made Irena wake up a little. "Are-are we there?" she asked sleepily, rubbing her eyes.

"Almost, little one."

"Dragon riders!" someone shouted as they got lower and closer to the island. They were just close enough to hear it and see the mad rush of people. Irena whimpered and pressed her face into Hiccup's upper arm.

"Uh oh," Astrid said under her breath.

The mob of people cleared a large circle for Stormfly and Toothless to land.

Luckily, the people didn't look scared or angry, just intrigued.

"Is that really a Night Fury?" someone asked in a hushed whisper.

"I thought they were a myth," muttered someone in the crowd. They were so far south, it appeared that they didn't know of the Red Death incident or the whole problem with Drago. Several heads nodded in agreement.

"What do they want?" muttered a woman.

"What do you want?" boomed the voice of a man who was probably that woman's husband.

"We come as friends," Hiccup promised. He made no move to dismount Toothless. He wouldn't until he knew they weren't going to attack them. Not that they would, anyway. Most people had the common decency to not fight when a child was present.

"State your names, island, and business." a man said.

Astrid was letting Hiccup handle this.

"Uh, I'm Hiccup, this," he patted his dragon. "is Toothless, that's Astrid and Stormfly and the little girl is Irena. We're from Berk and

we've come to see Cassia." Irena perked up at the name.

"Cassia?" someone asked. "How come?"

"We have something to show her." Astrid said.

"Cassia? Did they say Cassia?" asked a woman's voice. "Let me through!" a woman shoved through the crowd and stopped in front of Hiccup and Astrid. "Cassia, you said?"

"Um, yes." Hiccup replied.

"She lives with me," the woman told them. She was an older lady, but not too old, who was a little on the bigger side with a kind, round face and her brunette hair in a bun on the top of her head. "Come along."

Hiccup and Astrid exchanged a look and then Astrid slipped off Stormfly and Hiccup clumsily got off Toothless, Irena in his arms.

The crowd watched them until the woman said to stop staring and get back to their own business. The crowd dispersed in an instant.

"Berk, you said?" the woman asked, leading them away from the spot where they landed. She didn't seem at all unnerved by the dragons following. "Up north, isn't it?"

"Way North," Hiccup replied, already a little surprised that it was warmer on the tiny island than Berk.

"How long did it take?"

"Four hours," Astrid replied.

"Oh dear, well, you need to rest. I'm Heidi, by the way. It's nice to meet you."

"It's nice to meet you too." Hiccup was surprised by her kindness.

"Your little girl's cute."

Irena stirred at the mention of her.

"Um, thanks," Astrid said awkwardly. "But she's not ours."

"Oh, who's is she?"

"Cassia's," Hiccup told her.

Heidi stopped in her tracks and turned around to face them, mouth gaping. "It can't be. She thinks her baby's dead."

"That's why we brought her. We thought they should see each other." Astrid explained, reaching over to stroke Irena's hair.

Heidi smiled brightly. "Oh, she'll be over the moon! Just try not to overexcite her. She gets anxious easily and it's not good for her

condition."

Condition?

At least she'll be happy to see her little girl.

Heidi lead them up to a small house. "She never stops talking about her little girl and how brave she was. She really needs this. Thank you for bringing her."

"You're welcome," Astrid smiled.

"Are-are you Cassia's mother?" Hiccup asked tentatively.

"I wish, she's a good girl. But no. I've just been caring for her since she came. She wasn't really attended to before the fire, it seems." Heidi tutted and opened the door and lead them inside. The dragons sat by either side of the door outside. Hiccup put Irena down and she whimpered and grabbed his hand.

"Cassia? Darling? You have a visitor." Heidi called into the back of the house.

A timid strawberry-blond girl peeked around the corner. She looked no older than eighteen, and Astrid dearly hoped she was older than that.

"It's alright, dear. Someone wants to see you." Heidi encouraged gently.

Cassia looked very unsure still until she finally saw Irena and Irena saw her. Cassia's eyes lit up and Irena was in shock.

"Irena?" Cassia asked in a whisper.

"Mama?" Irena tilted her head a bit.

Cassia took a few tentative steps into the room and Irena shot into her arms.

"My love," Cassia murmured as Irena wound her arms around her mother's neck. Her voice was quiet. "You're alive."

A moment later, Cassia pulled back just enough to look Irena over. There were tears in her eyes as she scanned her up and down. "You've gotten so big, angel."

Irena could only nod.

"I missed you,"

"I missed you too, Mama." Irena said, smiling a little.

"Are these people taking care of you?"

Irena nodded. "They're my 'dopted Mommy and Daddy."

Cassia coughed a bit and then asked. "Are you happy?"

Irena nodded honestly. "Yes."

"That's good." Cassia replied, tucking Irena's hair behind her ear. "I'm so sorry I lost you, my love."

"It's okay,"

Cassia pulled Irena back into a hug.

"That's the most I've seen her talk." Heidi observed quietly.

Hiccup and Astrid both looked at her.

"She's shy. And anxious. She doesn't like to talk. She likes to sew and knit and hum, but she's a very jittery person. She probably won't want to answer many questions about before she came here, it makes her nervous."

"We know most of it, actually." Hiccup explained. Heidi's confused expression prompted him to continue. "Her, Uh, Irena's father is being held on our island. I made him answer some things. There's only a few more things we'd like to know."

"You found him?"

"He found us," Astrid corrected grimly.

"But he can't leave and he won't be hurting anyone ever again." Hiccup promised.

"Thank Freya." Heidi breathed. She was silent for a few beats before continuing. "I can try to answer those questions, if you'd like, while they get reacquainted, the sweet dears. She's told me more than I think she'd ever tell the two of you."

On the other side of the room, Irena was showing her birthmother the spot where her tooth was missing and telling her all kinds of things like when she broke her arm and about Jakob and Colby. Cassia was listening intently, smiling softly the entire time.

"That'd be fantastic," Hiccup replied.

"Well, do sit." Heidi waved them towards chairs. She glanced at Astrid's still small, yet noticeable, baby bump. "Especially, you. Sit. Make yourselves at home."

So they sat.

"What kinds of things do you need to know?" Heidi asked.

"How old is she?" Astrid asked right away.

"Ah," Heidi smiled sadly. "Not quite twenty. We're a couple of months away from that." Cassia coughed lightly again from the other side of the room.

"So she had Irena when she was... fifteen?" Astrid asked.

"Just about, I believe. From what I understand, she didn't want to have any babies and she certainly didn't want to marry that man. But I don't think she was given much choice in the matter."

Astrid scowled at that. How terrible. She felt like crying a little, in fact. Pity and disgust and anger all pulsed in her at once.

"Do you know why he married her?" Hiccup asked Heidi, putting his hand on Astrid's back and rubbing a little.

Heidi shook her head. "She doesn't either. She was the only child of a poor farmer and his wife. He stumbled across them, apparently, and gave them an awfully large amount of money for Cassia's hand. They accepted."

Teenage marriages weren't unheard of, money was a popular reason for many marriages, but that didn't mean it sat right with the Chief of Berk or his wife. Good thing the creep was locked up now.

"Her name," Hiccup started. "it sounds Roman-"

"She's not." Heidi interrupted. "Definitely not. Her parents just liked the name. They heard it in stories."

"A few things Irena has said to us make it sound like Cassia is Christian. Is that true?" Astrid asked. Not that it mattered. Not really.

"Vaguely. Her mother's family was in some form, it seems, Christian, so it was passed on."

"Okay," Astrid nodded.

"Anything else?" Heidi asked Hiccup and Astrid. When they shook their heads, she spoke again. "Well, you didn't ask, but you might as well know that Cassia miscarried not long after she arrived here from stress. I think she may have lost one before Irena as well, but I can't be certain. She gets upset when I ask her about it."

"That's understandable," Hiccup said quietly.

"I think you ought to tell her that weirdo isn't able to cause trouble any more once she's done with the little one. She'll be thrilled. Well, more thrilled than she is now. That little girl means everything to her."

Hiccup shifted uncomfortably in his seat. This wasn't going to be easy, was it?

* * *

><p>"Oh and Mama, I got a dragon!" Irena exclaimed excitedly.<p>

Her mother smiled softly. She wasn't afraid of dragons, they were sentient creatures. She knew they could feel pain. And fear. Like she could. "Have you?"

Irena nodded. "Her name is Safira! She's blue and she's-" the little girl held her hands about as far apart as Safira was long. "This big! She's just a baby, but Daddy says she won't get much bigger."

Cassia coughed once more (she hadn't been well since the fire) and cringed slightly at Irena's usage of the affectionate title for,

presumably, the man in the room. He looked nice enough, but what did she know? Irena was happy with the couple it seemed, much happier than she had been before everything happened, so these people were probably treating her well. Cassia brushed it off.

"Will you come back with us, Mama?" Irena asked suddenly, grabbing at her mother's hand.

"Oh, darling, I don't think that's a good idea." Cassia said softly, combing her fingers through her daughter's tangled hair. She was still kneeling to get the best view of the daughter she had missed growing in the past months.

"Why not?" Irena asked innocently.

Cassia sighed. "I don't think you'd understand, my love."

"I'm big!" Irena countered. "I'm almost five!"

"I know, Irena. You're a very big girl now. But it has nothing to do with being big, I'm afraid."

Irena looked down and scuffed her toe on the ground. "But I want you to meet Safira and-and-"

Cassia put her finger under Irena's chin and tilted it back towards her. "I know sweetheart, I know."

Irena blinked and then threw her arms around the woman in front of her. Cassia almost fell back with the force of the hug, but caught Irena and held her tightly against her anyway.

"I want to be with you." Irena's whisper was barely audible, but Cassia heard it and it made her want to cry with joy.

"She's very affectionate." Heidi commented kindly, loud enough for Cassia to hear as well. She hadn't heard, but she had seen the exchange. Cassia was a quiet girl. Astrid and Hiccup nodded in agreement and Cassia smiled softly.

"Why don't you come introduce yourself, Cassia?" Heidi suggested. She had talked a bit more with Hiccup and Astrid after the basic introduction and explanation of things and they were very nice people.

Cassia looked nervous, but nodded and gathered Irena in her arms. She stood up, Irena's tiny arms wound around her neck.

"Hi Cassia," the blonde woman began. She didn't look too much older than herself, Cassia thought. She was pregnant, as Irena had mentioned, and it made her heart hurt a little more than it ought to have. She knew it was probably for the best that she lost those babies. The girl was quite pretty with blonde hair and blue eyes and Cassia wondered if people had ever mistaken her for Irena's actual mother. "I'm Astrid. It's nice to meet you."

"You too," Cassia said quietly, holding Irena as close as possible. She could feel the little girl's soft breath on her cheek. She smelled of sweet things and her dress was newer-looking and soft. Irena's 'parents' were probably quite well off.

"And I'm Hiccup." said the auburn-haired man that Irena had referred to as her Daddy. What an odd name. He looked a little uncomfortable, but he sounded pleasant enough, albeit a little nasally. He was kind of attractive, Cassia supposed, not that she really noticed those kinds of things.

"Hi,"

"Irena looks a lot like you." Astrid told Cassia kindly.

Cassia smiled a little. They seemed so nice. Neither of them had jumped up and tried to be overly aggressive in their greetings, seemingly sensing her apprehension. It'd be cruel to take Irena away from them, wouldn't it? Especially when she had a happy life with them.

After a few moments of small talk, Cassia felt Irena drop her head to her shoulder and then her breathing evened out. She was asleep.

"Has she always fallen asleep so fast?" Hiccup questioned.

"She hit her head when she was two." Cassia explained quietly, rubbing the sleeping girl's back. The fall wasn't exactly an accident, but they didn't need to know that. "She was in and out of consciousness for a few hours and she's fallen asleep fast ever since."

"Oh," was all Hiccup said.

"We have some good news." Astrid said suddenly.

"Oh! Right!" Hiccup smiled. "Dagur's locked up and there is no chance of him escaping or hurting anyone ever again. I made sure."

Cassia's smile broadened and she felt tears prick at her eyes. "Thank God,"

"...he told me some of the things that happened and I'm so sorry. I knew him when we were kids and I've always known he was a lunatic, but I didn't know he was capable of..." Hiccup let out a long breath and shook his head slowly. "If I'd have known, I would've tried to do something before... I'm so sorry, Cassia."

Cassia shook her head. There was nothing he could've done. Or anyone could've done. At least she got Irena out of the whole ordeal. The only one that survived.

"Cassia," Heidi began after the awkward silence, making the girl look to her. "I've spoken to them and they suggested you maybe going back to live on their island. What do you think?" They had mentioned it, especially when they saw how much Irena and Cassia loved each other. Hiccup nodded a bit and Astrid smiled.

"We've got plenty of room." Hiccup promised. "You could even get a dragon if you'd like. We've got a lot. And you'd get to see Irena all the time."

It was a generous offer, Cassia had to admit. She would get to see her little girl everyday. And Irena would get all her parents to love

and to love her. No one would have to be separated. She almost considered saying yes, but she knew she couldn't agree. No matter how much she loved Irena, it wouldn't be fair to her. She might get confused with the different parenting styles. Plus, with just them, Irena was getting nice things and the love Cassia could only ever dream of giving her. And they had loved Irena like she never got the chance too.

Cassia shook her head. No, she wouldn't go stay with them. She was happy here with Heidi. It was the first place she had felt loved in a long time.

But Irena had told Cassia she wanted to stay with her. Maybe she didn't mean stay with her, though. Maybe she just wanted to be close to her.

"You can visit then." Astrid said.

Cassia smiled a bit. Yes, she could visit.

Maybe that would be alright with Irena.

* * *

><p>It was an hour or so before Irena woke again. She only woke because she was hungry, like everyone else was. She sat on her mother's lap for all of dinner and then there was talk of heading back to Berk.<p>

"Can Mama come with us?" Irena asked Hiccup and Astrid, interrupting her father.

Cassia clenched her hand into a nervous fist at her daughter's outburst. Interruptions hadn't been taken too kindly by Irena's real father.

Hiccup didn't seem to mind. "No, kiddo. She said she doesn't want to and we can't make her."

Irena looked at Cassia sadly. "Are you sure, Mama?"

Cassia nodded sadly.

Irena sighed.

"She can come visit, though." Astrid told Irena.

"And we can use airmail dragons to keep in touch." Hiccup added.

"It'll be okay, my love." Cassia whispered.

Irena nodded. She wasn't hungry anymore. She just wanted to go home.

* * *

><p>"Thank you so much," Astrid said to Heidi after they had all eaten and were preparing to head back to Berk. Toothless and Stormfly had both met and taken well to Cassia.<p>

"You're very welcome. And thank you." Heidi replied. "You three are welcome to visit anytime."

"You're welcome to visit Berk anytime." Astrid smiled.

"Can I hug you both?" Heidi asked. "I think that's necessary after today."

Astrid and Hiccup both smiled and laughed and let her hug them.

Irena was giving her mother a last, teary goodbye hug.

"Sh, darling. I'll see you soon, I promise. I won't lose you again." Cassia promised, stroking Irena's hair lovingly.

"I love you, Mama." Irena whispered. "A whole lot."

"I love you too, baby." Cassia replied. She kissed Irena on the head. "I'll see you soon."

Irena nodded and squeezed Cassia one more time.

"You give me a hug too, Irena." Heidi said.

Irena complied.

"It was very nice to meet you." Hiccup said to Cassia and extended his hand to her. Cassia took it cautiously. "We'll see you soon, I hope."

Cassia nodded.

Astrid hesitated, but hugged the other girl.

Cassia returned it cautiously. "Thank you for taking care of my little girl."

"You're welcome." Astrid replied. "She's very sweet."

"I'll visit soon."

"Good,"

"Are we ready to go?" Hiccup asked Astrid and Irena. Both of them nodded, the one of them sadly.

Irena was situated on Toothless and Hiccup got on behind her, nervously watching Astrid mount Stormfly.

"See you soon," Hiccup said to their new friends, clicking Toothless' tail into position. Irena was clinging to his arm sadly.

Cassia and Heidi smiled

"Let's go, bud." Hiccup said. Toothless took off and Stormfly followed.

Irena waved clumsily to her mother and Cassia waved back.

And then, they were gone.

Irena sniffled into Hiccup the whole ride home.

* * *

><p>"Can I sleep in your room?" Irena asked Astrid while she was combing her hair out. Safira had already curled up on the shelf with Patches.<p>

"Sure you can," Astrid promised. They were both in their nightclothes. Astrid's made her bump more prominent.

Irena pulled her knees to her chest. "Will my mama really come visit?"

"I'm sure she will." Astrid reassured, tying off one of Irena's braids.

"I love her a lot."

"I know,"

"I love you too." Irena said hurriedly.

"And I love you." Astrid smiled. "We all do, little one."

"I'm tired."

Astrid put down the comb. "Go get Kaida and Lena, okay?"

"Okay," Irena skittered into her bedroom to get her toys before coming back and climbing into the bed. Astrid joined her and pulled the blanket over both of them. The candle was going to stay lit until Hiccup came home.

"My real daddy can't get me any more, can he?"

"No, little one. Hiccup won't let that happen."

"Good." Irena snuggled into Astrid's side. She loved her real mama, but she loved Astrid too. And they both gave good hugs. "Is your baby okay?"

"I think so. It likes to move around a lot and it drives me crazy."

"You can feel it move?" Irena sounded disgusted.

Astrid nodded and laughed. "You'll be able to feel it too, when it gets bigger."

"That's weird." Irena scrunched up her nose.

"Yeah, I guess it is." Astrid chuckled. "Why don't you get some sleep, Irena?"

"Okay," Irena sat up and kissed Astrid's cheek. "Good night, Mommy."

"Good night, Irena."

When Hiccup came home, they were both very much asleep, curled together.

He was glad they hadn't lost Irena. She completed their family in a special way. They needed her.

* * *

><p>AN: Tada! You've met Irena's mommy and got some backstory! I hope you liked this chapter! It kills me to say it, but I'm almost done with this! Just a few more chapters until it's over. It's been a wild ride, I'll tell you that. I reached 400 reviews recently and I am gobsmacked so many people like this story. It is incredible. **_

**As always, I thank you so much for reading and profusely apologize for the late update!**

**Please review if you can!**

**See you next time!**

**~Pink**

25. Chapter 25

**I'm sorry this chapter is short, but the last chapter was so long! I hope you like it anyway!**

* * *

><p>"Today you are you! That is truer than true! There is no one alive who is you-er than you!" ~Dr. Seuss**_

* * *

><p>It was the morning of Irena's fifth birthday, and Astrid and Hiccup were determined to give her the best birthday she ever had. To be honest, it wasn't going to be very hard. Irena's first four birthdays had not been very happy occasions.<p>

They were still going to spoil her a little bit. What was the point of having a birthday without spoiling the birthday girl?

It didn't take much to make Irena happy, so they knew she was going to have a good day. Especially with the one big surprise they had for her.

Cassia was on Berk for a visit.

And Irena had no idea, as Cassia had come much too early in the morning for little girls to be awake.

Cassia had nearly had a panic attack when all the dragons swarmed around her to sniff her.

Toothless, knowing how much the nervous girl meant to his rider's hatchling, growled at the dragons protectively. And when the Alpha gave an order, the dragons were wise to listen.

Cassia's anxiousness and dislike of staying still made her want to help Astrid set up for the little party they having for Irena later in the day so the five year old would be surprised when she woke up.

It had been several weeks since Cassia had seen the couple that had adopted her little girl and in those weeks, Astrid had become more obviously pregnant. And slightly more uncomfortable. Now, other people could actually feel the baby moving around. Meaning she felt it a lot more than she had before. Hiccup thought it was the greatest thing ever. Astrid had to disagree.

Astrid moved a slightly wilting bouquet of wildflowers in a cup from the table to the shelf.

Cassia's confusion at the young woman's attachment to an almost dead bunch of flowers must have been obvious, because Astrid smiled and said that Irena had given her those flowers for her own birthday just a few days before.

Astrid hadn't wanted to cause a fuss or take away attention from the Irena, so she hadn't brought it up. Hiccup had, of course, made her something, despite her telling him not to. He was impossible.

Cassia had smiled back.

Toothless had been whining by Irena's door all morning, eager to wake the little girl. There was going to be a party later. And a party meant good food. And Irena and Jakob and Colby often slipped him scraps.

"I think it's about time to wake her up." Astrid commented. Toothless whined excitedly, swooshing his tail all about.

Hiccup laughed. He and Toothless weren't leaving until Irena woke up and they'd be back for her party. "Alright, bud. Go on. And be gentle."

Toothless snorted. Of course he'd be careful with the hatchling. He went into Irena's room.

And a couple of moments later, Irena rushed out fully dressed, but her hair was still mussed from sleep. Toothless followed her out, proud he had accomplished his mission. Safira scampered out to catch up with her best friend.

"There's the birthday girl!" Hiccup said cheerfully, ruffling her already messy hair.

"Happy birthday, little one." Astrid added with a smile.

Irena smiled shyly and mumbled a quiet 'thank you'. She couldn't believe they cared enough about her to celebrate her birthday they way they were.

Cassia, still unnoticed by her little girl, bit her lip and, twisting

her hand, spoke up. "Happy birthday, my love."

Her voice was soft, but it certainly caught Irena's attention.

"Mama!" Irena cried excitedly, dashing into her mother's arms.

Cassia laughed and picked the excited girl up before kissing the top of her head. "Hello, sweetheart."

"You did come visit! You did!" Irena said, practically bouncing. She was smiling so hard, it looked almost painful. She whipped her head around to look at Hiccup and Astrid, who were grinning. "You knew!" she said accusingly, still cheerful.

"We wanted it to be an extra special birthday surprise for an extra special little girl." Astrid replied.

"It's a very good surprise." Irena replied enthusiastically.

The three adults chuckled.

Hiccup and Toothless left a few minutes later, leaving the girls to themselves. Usually, Astrid would be at the Academy, even though Fishlegs technically had taken over for her at this point. She still helped out. But she had used the fact that she wasn't necessary to her advantage. While Cassia fixed Irena's hair with an amazingly gentle touch, Astrid finished up the necessary preparations. And then the three of them went to breakfast, Astrid introducing Cassia to anyone who came over to see who the stranger holding the chief's daughter's hand was. They had a few hours to show Cassia around before they had to get back home.

And finally, it was time for the party.

Astrid's mother had made food and little cakes that were put out and a pile of presents accumulated on the floor as the partygoers came. As the presents increased, the food decreased.

Hiccup and Toothless had made it back in time, thankfully. Irena was just beside herself. She had never gotten so many presents before! Lena and Kaida and the bracelet her daddy had made her (she never went a day without wearing it) all counted as gifts before, but she had never seen so many at one time. Certainly not for her.

"Where's Ingrid and Colby?" Irena asked suddenly. Her Mommy had said that they were coming and there was no sign of either child. Jakob was there already.

"Ingrid was at training today." Fishlegs commented, looking a little concerned. Ben nodded. Ingrid and Ben stayed close with Irena, which was nice. They were always eager babysitters.

The door opened slowly and Ingrid and Colby came inside, both holding little packages. Colby was bright red and sniffly, Ingrid looked sheepish.

"Sorry," Ingrid apologized. "We had a bit of a hold up, but we're all good now. Right, Colby?"

Colby nodded shyly.

"Don' worry 'bout it, lass. E'ry one else is jus' early." Gobber chuckled.

Ingrid and Colby added their presents to the pile.

"Well, Irena, do you want to open your presents now?" Astrid asked.

Irena nodded shyly.

Astrid laughed. "Alright, well, go on. Everyone's here."

Irena sat on the floor cross-legged near the stack and before she could reach for one to open, Hiccup said to hang on. Off a shelf, he grabbed a few packages. "From our long distance friends. They heard it was your birthday." he explained, plopping them in front of the little girl.

There were four total, each with a small note.

The first one was from Rapunzel and Eugene and it was a set of paints, paintbrushes, paper, and a storybook straight from Corona. 'Every little girl needs a good set of paints and a great story' the note had said.

The second one was a beautiful silky pink dress with tiny purple flowers. It was from Anna, Elsa, Kristoff, Sven the Reindeer, and their talking snowman Olaf. 'We hope you like your dress, Birthday Princess. Hopefully we get to see you soon!' the note read.

The next package was a child size bow and a set of arrows. It was from Merida and her family. 'Your parents can teach you how, but I will show you the right way the next time I see you.' promised the princess.

The final long-distance package was from Kristianna and her sisters. It was a little wooden top. 'We love ours, hopefully you'll enjoy it too!' said the note.

Irena was beside herself already and she hadn't even gotten to the people who were in attendance's gifts yet.

She had just opened a beaded necklace from Ingrid and a tiny, doll sized cradle from Ben when there was a knock at the door.

Gobber opened it.

"Eh, Chief," said Not-So-Silent-Sven awkwardly to Hiccup. "Sorry to in'erupt, but we have a problem down by the docks. There's some arguin' and they won't listen to no one."

Hiccup sighed. "Alright, I'll be right there."

Sven nodded and left.

Hiccup turned to Irena, who looked sad. "I'll be right back, little one. Just don't open my present until I am back, okay?"

Irena nodded. She knew he was important, but sometimes she thought it wasn't fair.

Hiccup and Toothless left again and before Irena could open anything else, Eret said awkwardly "Irena, I'm sorry but I don't know too much about little girls. Hopefully, a hug will make it up to you?"

Irena smiled and got up to give Eret a hug.

Soon, Irena was nearing the end. From Colby she got a messy drawing of Safira, from Jakob, his lucky rock, from Valka, a blanket, Astrid's mother made her a dress and Astrid's father said he was still working on his present. Snotlout had managed to find an old toy wooden horse of his to give to her, the twins gave her face paint for some reason, Fishlegs made her a small Book of Dragons with the breeds she was most familiar with, Gobber made her more blocks because she really liked the first set. And Irena was just about to open her mother's present when Hiccup and Toothless came back.

Hiccup slipped in and said "Carry on,"

Astrid glanced at him.

Hiccup shook his head. Everything was fine. Arguments were common, those guys were just being particularly obnoxious.

Irena smiled and continued. Cassia had made her little girl a stuffed bear. She had obviously put a lot of time and effort into it. Irena loved it.

Astrid had given her a headband, which she fell in love with.

And then, Irena opened Hiccup's. It was a blank book with lots of pages and two pencils.

"You can use that for anything." Hiccup told the little girl.
"Writing stuff you don't want to forget or for drawing. Whatever you want."

Irena nodded happily.

Irena hugged every single person before they went home that evening.

Eventually, all the gifts were put in Irena's room and the birthday girl was falling asleep against Cassia's side.

"Did you have a nice birthday?" Astrid asked Irena.

Irena nodded sleepily and put her thumb in her mouth. She only did it when she was falling asleep now, she was growing out of the habit.

"Good," Astrid smiled.

"I think it's time for birthday girls to go to bed." Hiccup commented.

Cassia nodded in agreement and stroked Irena's hair.

"Can you stay with me, Mama?" Irena asked Cassia.

Cassia glanced at Hiccup and Astrid. She didn't want to step on anyone's toes.

They nodded.

Irena slipped from her seat and hugged Astrid's legs. "Thank you,"

"You're welcome. Good night," Astrid replied, crouching to hug Irena. Irena then hugged Hiccup before going off to bed. Cassia went with her. Toothless went to his rock bed in Hiccup and Astrid's room.

"Well, that was fun." Hiccup said to Astrid, pulling her to him.

"It was a good idea." Astrid agreed, resting her head on his shoulder. "She's so happy."

"It was a good idea to think to invite Cassia." Hiccup replied. It had been Astrid's idea to ask Cassia to come.

"Mhm,"

"Is someone else tired?" Hiccup teased.

"No," Astrid lied, stifling a yawn.

Hiccup chuckled. "Come on, yes you are."

"It's your kid's fault." Astrid replied, taking his hand and pressing it right where the baby kept kicking. It kept her up at night. It wasn't very enjoyable. But at least she got a cute little kid out of it, right? A drooly, screaming kid, but it'd probably be cute anyway.

Hiccup laughed again. "Sorry,"

"You're not sorry." Astrid muttered.

He grinned. "No, not exactly."

"Can we go to bed now?" Astrid asked. "I'm tired."

Hiccup shook his head. "Of course we can."

Everyone had a great day. It was certainly one of Irena's favorite memories.

* * *

><p>AN: I have absolutely no idea if Vikings had birthday parties, but, hey. It's fiction, right? I really do hope you liked this chapter! It's cute and fluffy! **_

**Good news, everyone! Next week will be a special Snoggletog chapter! I'm so excited! :) Thanks for reading!**

**Please review if you can! It means a lot!**

**See you next week! Happy Hanukkah, if you celebrate!**

**~Pink**

26. A Snoggletog To Remember

**What's this? Another early update? Why yes, yes it is! Due to the hubbub of the holidays, I figured it'd be best for everyone to post this chapter early! And it's an important one. Why? Well, you'll see.**

**It's a few weeks past Irena's birthday in this chapter.**

**(Niphe is pronounced Knife, by the way.)**

* * *

><p> "Each newborn life a canvas, yet unpainted,_

**this still unbroken skin**

**This uncorrupted mind.**

**Every life is unbelievably unlikely**

**The chances of existence almost infinitely small.**

**The most common thing in life is life**

**And yet every single life bearing new life**

**is a miracle." ~ ****_"Miracle" from _Matilda the Musical. Lyrics by Tim Minchin**

"Christmas _doesn't come from a store, maybe Christmas perhaps means a little bit more..." Dr. Seuss' _The Grinch

* * *

><p>It was one day before Snoggletog and instead of organizing decorations and the party on Berk, he was on Beserk with several other chiefs from the Archipelago to (hopefully) lock Dagur up for good. The meeting would've been held on Berk, but Hiccup had basically begged for it to be anywhere else. Irena didn't need that happening so close to her.<p>

It didn't do much to calm him that Astrid was quite pregnant at the moment.

"I don' know why they couldn wait 'til after the holiday."
Kristianna's father said to a very anxious looking Hiccup. "We've go' families to be with."

Hiccup shrugged halfheartedly and Toothless pressed his head against his side comfortingly. The young chief scratched the dragon's neck.

Kristianna's father was there not because he was a chief but because Kristianna was involved in the issue as well. She had asked to stay at home with her sisters and had written out anything that she wanted to say in a letter.

"You especially, Eh? Kristi told me yer wife is pregnant."

Hiccup nodded. And Irena wanted a little sister. Astrid also wanted a girl, but said a boy would be fine too. He didn't have a preference. He just wanted the baby to be healthy and Astrid to be okay afterwards.

"What's this?" asked an older chief. "Little Hiccup's got a wife?"

"Yeah, don' you remember ye old man?" replied someone else. "They got married months ago! You went!"

Hiccup cracked a smile. Most of the chiefs were friendly and very entertaining. At least he wouldn't be lonely or bored.

"He married a pretty little blonde thing." said the man that was probably the one of the younger chiefs there who was about thirty five or so. Hiccup remembered him well from when he was little and their fathers met.

"Could prob'ly have yeh on the ground in ten seconds flat, beggin' fer yer mother, that girl." the second man said with a chuckle.

Hiccup smiled. Yeah, she could. Toothless clucked in agreement.

"Her name is Astrid, right lad?" asked someone else.

"Yeah," Hiccup replied.

"Pretty and tough. A bit of a handful, ain't she?" asked the first man.

"A little,"

All the men chuckled.

The Beserk chief, Dagur's cousin, came in then.

"Couldn' ye have waited, Niphe?" someone asked him. "The lad's wife is pregnant and Snoggletog's tomorrow!"

"I know," Niphe replied. "And I'm sorry, but I want to get this settled before the holiday so we can all go home and relax. Please, sit."

They sat. Toothless curled up on the floor next to Hiccup like an overgrown guard dog. He wouldn't leave his side.

"So, as we know, we're here because Dagur caused several problems

around the Archipelago and affected several people." Niphe began. "Chief Hiccup of Berk, as this mostly affects people you're close to, would you mind explaining everything that you know?"

"Um," Hiccup started, making everyone look at him. "About five or so years ago, Dagur offered a poor family a large sum of money to marry their fourteen year old daughter, Cassia. They accepted and Dagur and Cassia were married. Cassia didn't want to marry him, but she didn't really have a choice. She also didn't want to have children, but also was left with very little choice as she wound up pregnant twice. The first one she lost, but the second baby survived. Her name is Irena.

"Toothless and I found Irena a while ago alone on an island and took her home with us. Astrid and I adopted her. But that's not exactly relevant right now. Dagur abused both Cassia and Irena severely. Irena has scars and marks all over her and Cassia is nervous and jumpy all the time."

"Alright." Niphe said. "We're all aware of how Dagur came to Berk to find Irena and why she was alone on that island. Could you tell us what happened on Berk?"

"He found Irena with Astrid and wanted to take her. Astrid wouldn't let him. Usually, she would've fought him, trust me, but she's pregnant and didn't want to risk anything. Irena wasn't hurt, but Dagur threatened the lives of both my wife and child and actually cut Astrid's arm. I fought him-" Toothless looked at him. Hiccup patted his head. "We fought him and eventually detained him."

"Thank you, Hiccup." Niphe said. "Now, Edvard, your eldest daughter was kidnapped by Dagur?"

"Yes, she was."

"Why?"

The man put Kristianna's letter away. He could just tell Niphe what happened. "Well, Hiccup was explorin' a while ago and landed on my island. Kristi, my daughter, she let him stay the night in our house. Somehow Dagur musta heard about Hiccup findin' the little girl and came to see if anyone on our island knew anythin'. I wasn't home when he came and threatened all my girls. Kristi had no choice but to tell him about Hiccup. But he took her on his boat for weeks. The rope he held her with cut into her wrists, poor thing. Thankfully, Hiccup and his dragon got her off and back home."

"Well," Niphe leaned back in his chair. "There are no laws against child abuse. Yet."

Everyone looked at him.

"A good deal of our islands are represented here today. We can pass a law against abuse and then get him on that. Hiccup, he threatened your wife and physically injured her, you get to lay any punishment you want on him. And Edvard, unfortunately your chief isn't here today, so you can't add any punishment. But, if there's anything you want, Hiccup could add it onto his for you. Which, isn't technically allowed but I'm sure we can let it slide just this once." It was clear Niphe was as done with his cousin's behavior as everyone else

was.

"I don' need to punish him. I'm just glad to have my girl back and safe." Edvard said.

"Alright. Hiccup? What do you want to happen?"

"I want him as far away from Irena and Cassia and Astrid and Kristianna as possible. I want him locked up where he can't get out." Hiccup said.

"Is-is that all, lad?" someone asked. "You could have him killed if you wanted."

"No," Hiccup responded. That was a little harsh, wasn't it? "I just never want to have to deal with him again."

"That can be arranged." Niphe promised Hiccup. "Now about that new law--"

"Hiccup!" shouted a voice from outside.

"Fishlegs?" Hiccup asked, standing up. Toothless got up too.

"Open the door." Niphe told one of his men. The man nodded and the door was opened, revealing the snow covered ground and letting in the frigid air.

"Sorry to interrupt, but Hiccup is needed back home immediately." Fishlegs said from Meatlug's back.

"Is everything okay?" Hiccup asked worriedly, walking towards the door.

Fishlegs just looked at him.

Hiccup sighed. He knew exactly what was wrong. "You're kidding, right? Now?"

"I'm not kidding. Astrid's in labor."

"Gods damnit, of course it would have to be today. Just my luck, isn't it." Hiccup mused, running his hand through his hair. Why not? Astrid was going to kill him.

"Go on, lad. She needs ya." Edvard said.

"We'll wrap things up here." Niphe added.

"Thanks," Hiccup said before darting outside, Toothless at his heels. The two of them joined Fishlegs and Meatlug in their journey home.

Toothless had never flown so fast for Hiccup in his life, but no way was he slowing down. Astrid needed his rider immediately and he was going to get him there come Hel or high water.

* * *

><p>Astrid was tough. She had been in labor for nearly twenty four

hours. Her mother was starting to worry that something was wrong.<p>

Hiccup hadn't left her side since he got home. He had no intentions of leaving her either.

Finally, things had started to pick up. Astrid had broken not soon after. She was exhausted and it just hurt so bad. She hated to cry, she hated to look weak in any way. But she just couldn't take it anymore. And she hated herself for it.

"Make it stop," she whimpered against Hiccup's chest. She was clutching at him desperately.

"I would if I could," he promised, stroking her sweaty hair. "I'm so sorry." He was starting to feel a little lightheaded. He never liked it when Astrid was upset and that on top of his lack of sleep and the actual stuff that was happening to Astrid didn't help.

"Hiccup," Astrid's mother said quietly, coming over to him. He didn't look well. "Maybe you should go outside and get some air."

"No," Hiccup protested, holding Astrid a little closer. "I'm-I'm okay." He lied. He didn't feel okay and he knew it. But he couldn't leave her. Even if he did kind of feel like he was going to throw up.

"You're not going to do her any good if you pass out." Ramona put her hand on Hiccup's shoulder. "She'll be alright for a few minutes without you. Come on."

"No," Astrid said quietly. She didn't want him to go. She needed him. "No,"

"Sweetheart, you'll be alright. It'll just be for a few minutes, okay?" Ramona said to Astrid.

Astrid reluctantly let Hiccup go.

Hiccup kissed the top of her head and untangled himself from her. "I'll be right back."

She looked so miserable, like he had betrayed her, but he had to leave. Just for a few minutes.

Toothless nuzzled him when he came outside. Stormfly clucked at him nervously. All the dragons were gone except for the two of them. Stormfly hadn't even mated. If a dragon's friend was to lay eggs for the first time, the more experienced one would often refuse her chances to later help the new mother care for her offspring. Hiccup figured Stormfly was too preoccupied with Astrid to, well, do anything herself.

"Not yet," he told them, sinking to the ground despite the snow and the temperature he hated. Toothless curled around him. "I can't believe I can't handle it." He dropped his head into his hands, his fingers tangling and pulling at his hair. He was Chief for Thor's sake. He had lost a leg and seen war and he couldn't even handle the birth of his own heir. Astrid needed him and he couldn't take it. He was weak. And he couldn't do anything about it. Sometimes he truly

hated himself.

Stormfly nuzzled at him and then stood to block the sharply cold winter wind from reaching him. Her rider loved the wispy human Alpha. She would keep him safe. Toothless' close proximity kept the young chief from freezing.

The air was filled with happy voices singing and laughing as the villagers put up their last of their colorful decorations. It was Snoggletog and the party was to be held that evening in the Great Hall. The only thing that reached Hiccup was the whistling wind and the occasional pained cry from the house.

Valka found him like that a few moments later. She approached him slowly and hesitated, but lightly put her hand on his head, rubbing his hair softly. She knew what was happening. If she had known Astrid better, she would've been in the house too. But she didn't feel comfortable and she didn't want to make Astrid uncomfortable either. "It's going to be alright, son."

"No it's not," Hiccup protested stubbornly, sounding like a child.

"Aye, it will be." she replied, crouching next to him. Toothless shimmied away so she'd have room.

"I couldn't even stay in there!" Hiccup said unexpectedly, his fingers grabbing at his hair tighter. He didn't look up. "What kind of a chief am I? What-what kind of a _father_ am I?"

"A good one," Valka replied calmly, gently prying her son's fingers out of his hair.

Hiccup scoffed.

"I've yet to meet a man who didn't need to leave the room for a moment, Hiccup." she soothed. "It's not pleasant for either parent. Especially the first time. But women, we can't really see it. And besides, we can't exactly leave."

Hiccup smiled just a little. He still hadn't looked up.

"Your father, stubborn as he was about not leaving me, eventually had to. Just for a little while. He had to collect himself just like you do."

Toothless had been getting increasingly better with the mention of Stoick. He didn't whine or shy away anymore. At that moment he just nuzzled Hiccup's side.

Valka sighed. "This is one of those times where a father would be of more use to you. But hopefully your old mother can make you understand, Hiccup. You aren't weak. Just overwhelmed. And you can go back in there when you're ready. And you will be able to hold Astrid's hand. And you will be there to see your child's first breath. You haven't missed your chance, son. I _promise_."

Hiccup looked up then. Slowly. He wiped at his face quickly. He hadn't realized he had cried at all. He wasn't even sure when it happened.

Valka smiled gently and wiped a tear he missed off his cheek with her finger. "Feeling better?"

He nodded. He didn't feel like he was going to pass out any more. That was good. The nausea was slowly fading. "Thanks, Mom."

She smiled. "You're welcome."

A few moments later, Hiccup stood, albeit with some difficulty. Five years with the metal leg and it still tripped him up. He dusted the snow from himself and looked nervously towards the front door of his house. Toothless whined.

"Going back in?" Valka asked, standing as well.

"I-" Hiccup ran his hand through his hair. "I think so."

"That's my brave boy." she told him. "I'll be nearby if you need me."

"Thanks again, Mom."

She nodded.

Hiccup went to the door and pushed it open. Stormfly clucked and Toothless purred reassuringly. Hiccup shut the door behind him.

* * *

><p>Everything happened in a blur. And then, there was a high pitched shriek. The pain instantly stopped.<p>

Astrid let out a long, ragged breath and closed her eyes exhaustedly, leaning against her husband. It was over now.

Hiccup squeezed her hand gently before kissing the top of her head. "You are amazing." he murmured against her hair. "Absolutely _amazing_."

After a moment of adjusting and cleaning, Astrid was more comfortably positioned in the bed. She was so tired. And sweaty. Her mother had wiped her face with a wet cloth and it was lovely. But somehow, not as lovely as the little whining sounds coming from the other side of the room.

"I'm sorry I had to leave." Hiccup said quietly, nuzzling against her cheek.

"It's fine, you big baby. I would've left too if I could've."

He chuckled and kissed her cheek. "Have I told you how much I love you today?"

"Only about six million times." Astrid teased, punching his arm lightly. She would never, ever get tired of hearing him say that.

"Well, make it six million and one, then. Because I love you so much."

"I love you too." she replied.

They were interrupted by one of the younger Healers coming over to them, a little squirming blanket bundle in her arms, smiling. It wasn't often that you got to be the person to present the new little heir to its parents. "Congratulations," she said, holding out the bundle to Astrid. "It's a healthy little boy."

Astrid reached out and took the baby from the girl, holding the baby tightly to her. She looked down at her new son in disbelief. All that time, all that pain, for him.

It was worth it. Every single minute was worth it.

She felt like she was going to cry again. This time for an entirely different reason.

"Hello, sweetheart." she cooed quietly, peering down at the baby's little face. His eyes were closed, but he was awake. "I'm your mama."

Hiccup smiled and kissed her head again.

Their son was perfect.

"Already a troublemaker, huh?" Astrid cooed about the pain he had just put her through, bouncing the infant a bit.

The baby made a little noise and Astrid smiled before kissing his little forehead, lingering a little. His skin, despite still being red and wrinkled, was soft and new and perfect. She could hardly believe that the tiny human in her arms had come out of her. That he was half her and half Hiccup, but an entirely new person at the same time.

She couldn't even begin to explain how much she already loved the little boy swaddled in her arms. It was beyond words.

Hiccup hesitantly raised his hand to stroke his baby's head gently. The child twitched and he drew his hand away like he'd hurt him.

"It's okay," Astrid promised quietly, smiling a little.

Hiccup touched the little head again. "Welcome to the world, buddy." he said softly. The baby twitched again, but he didn't.

How was it possible to love something so little so much?

He didn't care about anything else. Not Dagur, not the men he left at the meeting. Just his son. And Astrid of course.

"Do you want to hold him, Daddy?" Astrid asked after a few blissful, quiet minutes. Her mother and the two Healers had left for now. Actually, Ramona was in the main room in case Astrid needed anything. The baby wasn't hungry yet, but he probably would be soon. And Astrid had no idea what to do.

Hiccup shook his head. He didn't want to. He might drop him and hurt

him, knowing his clumsy self.

"You'll be fine." Astrid rolled her eyes. "Come on, take him. He needs to get to know you too."

So, carefully, Hiccup took the tiny body into his arms. The baby weighed almost nothing. He smiled at the baby. Like the sappy dork he was.

"There," Astrid said, laying her head on Hiccup's shoulder. "Was that so hard?"

"Oh hush," he said, never looking up from the baby.

The new mother laughed and reached over to touch the child's face gently. "He needs a name, Hiccup."

"Yeah," Hiccup agreed.

"...Stoick?" Astrid suggested quietly.

To Astrid's surprise, Hiccup shook his head. "No,"

"_No_?" the mood in the room had changed drastically. From utter to to sadness.

"I _can't_... That's a lot of pressure for one little baby isn't it? And..." he sighed. "I don't think I could call him that. It would hurt too much. Sorry."

"Don't apologize." Astrid said quietly. "We don't have to name him that."

"Maybe it can be his middle name?" Hiccup said quietly.

"Yeah," Astrid agreed. Snuggling against him.

* * *

><p>Toothless banged into the room not long after. He sniffed the air. It smelled very faintly of blood in his rider's room. When human eggs hatched, it seemed to be more painful on the female that it ever was on a dragon even though humans only had one or two babies at a time.<p>

"Hey bud," Hiccup said, still holding the baby. He carefully passed the infant back to its mother. Toothless came over, sniffing and whining. Hiccup patted his head. He did feel better. "I'm fine, buddy. Do you want to meet the baby?"

Toothless purred, nuzzling his best friend in congratulations before nodding.

"He's over here, boy." Astrid said quietly. Toothless bounded over to Astrid's side of the bed and sniffed her before nuzzling her carefully. "Hi Toothless."

The dragon caught a new scent. It was a mix of Hiccup and Astrid and something new entirely. He nosed the blanket in Astrid's arms carefully, making it squirm. It was the baby he smelled.

Astrid shifted the newborn so the dragon could get a better look.
"What do you think?"

Toothless cooed happily and smiled his dragon smile. What a nice, strong looking hatchling. Good for them.

There was a knocking on the window. Stormfly.

"She wants to see." Astrid said.

"But it's freezing." Hiccup protested.

"Oh, you can open the window for a few minutes, Chief. Don't be a crybaby."

Hiccup sighed and stood up. It seemed she had recovered well already. Her sass was back.

He opened the window. Stormfly clucked as she peeked in.

"Hi girl!" Astrid said, holding out the baby a little. "Look who decided to come today."

Stormfly sniffed the air, getting the human hatchling's scent. She purred happily. She couldn't get to her friend, but she wanted to know she was happy for her.

It had been a while since the dragons barged in. Toothless was curled in the corner on his rock bed, Stormfly was outside, directly under the now shut window. The baby had eaten and fallen asleep and woken up. And fallen asleep. Now he was awake. Astrid, as tired as she was, was still holding him. She didn't want to put him down.

There was a knock on the door and it cracked open to reveal Astrid's mother. "A certain little girl wants to see you."

Irena. Of course. How could they forget?

The door opened a bit more and, with a gentle push, Irena stumbled nervously into the room, clutching Lena tight to her chest nervously with one hand, her thumb with in her mouth. Safira and Patches had run off together hours ago to get away from all the commotion. She had been at Colby's.

"Hey little one." Hiccup said, getting up and going over to her. She was nowhere near as excited as he thought she'd be. "What's wrong?"

Irena was excited that the baby was finally born. Truly she was. But, even though she knew Hiccup and Astrid still loved her, and would always love her, there was still a part of her that believed she might be forgotten. She shrugged at his question.

He picked her up. "Don't you want to meet your little brother?"

She nodded. Yes, of course she did.

He went back to the bed and sat down, positioning her in his lap.

"Hi Irena," Astrid said to the five year old.

"Hi," Irena said around her thumb.

"This is your brother, little one." she said, moving her arms so Irena could get a better look at the baby. As soon as she did, she smiled and took her thumb out of her mouth.

"What do you think?" Hiccup asked Irena.

"He's cute," Irena giggled quietly, scrunching up her nose a little. He was so little. Was she that little when she was born? She'd have to ask her Mama next time she saw her. She had gone back home two days after her birthday.

"I hope a brother's okay." Astrid said to Irena. Irena nodded. She had wanted a sister of course, but maybe a brother wouldn't be so bad.

"What's his name?" Irena asked her parents.

"We haven't picked one yet." her mother explained. They didn't really have to know for a few days, until the official naming, but it was nice to know before hand so the new baby wouldn't be just 'the baby'.

"Maybe you can help, Irena." Hiccup shrugged. Astrid looked at him funny. Were they really about to let a five year old name a baby?

He gave her a look back that said 'of course not, but she can think she's helping'.

Astrid shrugged a little. What harm could it do?

Irena thought hard about all the boy names she knew. Hiccup wasn't a very good name, it was already taken. Leif was the name of the eldest boy in the family who had almost adopted her (they sent her a belated birthday/early Snoggletog present a few days before- a little bag with her name on it for when she went on adventures). Colby and Jakob and Ben already existed. What about...

"_Gabriel_." Irena said finally.

Gabriel? Where in the name of Odin did that name come from?

Astrid and Hiccup looked from Irena, to the baby, to each other, and then back to the baby.

It was a nice name.

And... it did sort of fit him, didn't it? It was unique. No other heir had been named Gabriel.

They looked back to each other.

"I like it." Astrid said with a smile. She couldn't believe it. She knew Irena was a smart kid, everyone did, but for a five year old to come up with a perfect name was rare.

"Really? Irena asked, sapphire eyes glinting happily. She had remembered hearing the name once before and she had always liked it. She was happy Mommy liked it too. Did Daddy? She looked up at Hiccup.

"I like it too." Hiccup said, ruffling her hair. "Good pick, little one."

Irena smiled widely and proudly. She had named her baby brother.

"Gabriel Stoick Haddock," Astrid said aloud for the first time. She smiled too. "It's perfect."

"We can call him Gabe. Maybe?" Hiccup suggested, hugging Irena close to him.

"Yeah," Astrid agreed.

"...what about the party?" Irena spoke up. She had enough presents from her birthday, but parties were always fun.

Astrid was confused. "What par-? _Oh_," Of course, it was Snoggletog. And she didn't have a present for anyone.

"I'm afraid not, little one." Hiccup chuckled before dropping a kiss on the little girl's head.

"That's okay," Irena replied. "Gabe is a good present."

"Yeah," Hiccup agreed. "He's a really good present."

"The best," Astrid added, dropping her head back onto Hiccup's shoulder. He wrapped an arm around her and kept one around Irena.

And so, the sun set early on the winter evening like it always did. The world was a frosted winter wonderland outside the warm house on the hill and the Hooligans were singing happy songs everywhere. Happy songs both for the holiday and the new little resident.

But the happiest residents of Berk were those of the newly expanded family, snug and warm and happy, celebrating the new heir's first Snoggletog and first day of life simultaneously.

It had been a tumultuous year for the new chief and his family, filled with highs and lows of the greatest caliber. There had been pain and war and even death, but there had also been new additions to the family, a marriage, new friends, and fun. It was a year they would never forget.

And the highly anticipated birth of little Gabriel Stoick Haddock, the boy who would one day inherit his father's title, just added to the memories.

* * *

><p>AN: Welcome baby Gabriel! You're very loved, little guy. **_

_**I'm sorry to say this friends, but this is the last chapter.
**_
_

**Never fear. There will be an epilogue and a sequel! Also, if you want, you can follow me on tumblr (I'm how2trainyourfangirl) and send me drabble requests! Just send me "Fractured Family-verse" before the prompt and I'll be more than happy to write it for you!**
_

**I'll save the sappiness for the epilogue's A/N. Please review if you can and thank you for reading!**
_

**Enjoy your holiday and your families!**
_

**See you next week! **
_

**~Pink**
_

27. Epilogue

__**This is it, you guys. The epilogue.**_
_

* * *

><p><p>

"The love of family and the admiration of friends is much more important than wealth and privilege." -Charles Kuralt

* * *

><p>"Alright, let's see what you've got!" Astrid shouted at the class of eager teenagers and their dragons. They took to the sky, as did Astrid and Stormfly.<p>

Irena didn't even look up from her beloved journal, she was busy scratching away in it with a pencil. Gabe was sitting on the blanket next to her, chewing on a wooden block the best he could with his newly emerging teeth.

The two children were on a blanket outside of the Dragon Academy while their mother was teaching. It kept them close in case they needed anything, but far enough away where the still-learning dragons couldn't accidentally hurt them. When Astrid wasn't teaching, the kids were usually at home with her, or, as of late, outside, with Gabe on a blanket, as Irena was getting her first weapons training from her mother (mostly with the bow and arrow she had received from Merida, because she had a slight fear of knives).

"There's my little warriors." came a voice from behind the two kids.

Irena looked up and craned her neck. "Daddy!" she cried excitedly, pushing the book and paper to the ground and getting to her feet in one fluid movement. She dashed over to him and hugged his legs. He hadn't been home when she'd gotten up this morning.

"It's like you haven't seen me in forever!" Hiccup laughed, hefting the five and a half year old into his arms.

She giggled and kissed his nose.

Toothless stretched up to give the girl a friendly lick, only making her giggle more. She patted his nose and he purred.

"Are you watching your brother for Mommy?"

Irena nodded.

"That's my good girl." Hiccup replied, dipping her backwards a little before holding her back up straight. "Has he been good?"

Irena nodded again. "He's drooling a lot though." she said, scrunching up her nose.

"That's because he's getting his teeth in." Hiccup explained before setting the girl on her feet. Toothless nuzzled her immediately, earning himself a hug from the girl. "Right, little buddy?"

Gabe, who had looked over at the first sound of his father's voice, waved his saliva-covered hands at his nickname, the block forgotten on the blanket. "Da!"

Hiccup scooped up the chubby-cheeked six month old and tickled his tummy. "Are you drooling all over your sister?"

Gabe laughed.

"That's what I thought." Hiccup smiled.

Gabe reached up his little hands and managed to snag one of the little braids in his father's hair, making him cringe hard. Astrid really needed to stop doing that.

"Ouch, buddy." Hiccup said calmly, prying his son's grabbing hands away from his hair.

Gabe put his hand back in his partially toothless mouth innocently. The boy had blonde hair and blue eyes, though they seemed to be turning more of a cloudy gray. He definitely had Hofferson in him with those genes. He had a generous spattering of freckles though, even at half a year old. That was certainly from Hiccup's side.

"Hey babe," Astrid said, dropping from Stormfly's back next to him. "What are you doing here?" The class was momentarily continuing without her, Valka had it under control.

Hiccup leaned over and kissed her, making Irena stick her tongue out in disgust. "I came to take the kids if that's okay."

Irena perked up. Going with Daddy usually meant doing something really fun.

"Of course it's okay. They'll have more fun with you anyway." Astrid replied, ruffling the tiny tuft of hair on her son's head with a smile. Gabe smiled contently. Honestly, you'd have never known she had a baby unless you saw Gabriel. Her mother said she was one of the lucky ones.

Irena bounced excitedly. Daddy had been really busy lately and had

been home at weird times. She kind of missed him.

"Looks like someone's excited." Astrid commented, nodding at the bouncy girl.

"Yes!" Irena agreed.

"Ya-ya!" Gabriel parroted to the best of his ability.

Astrid and Hiccup both smiled.

There was a roar of an agitated dragon and Astrid sighed. She was needed. "See you guys later."

"Yup," Hiccup kissed her cheek.

Irena hugged Astrid's legs. "Bye Mommy!"

"Bye," she hugged her back, smiling. "Be good for Daddy."

The last comment was aimed more towards the baby than the girl.

Gabe waved clumsily at his mother as she and Stormfly went back to the teenagers.

"Where are we going, Daddy?" Irena asked, putting her book and pencils and blanket back in her little bag as Hiccup gathered up Gabe's toys.

"I don't know, little one. I was thinking we could figure that out together." Hiccup replied, tucking the toys one-handed into Toothless' saddle bag. He had been getting good at doing things one-handed lately. "Any ideas?"

Irena looked up at him. "No,"

Hiccup shrugged. He had been so, so busy lately. It was a particularly nice summer, people were more mobile and outside more and so were the dragons. There were disputes to settle and saddles to fix and meetings to organize. It was his first summer as chief. He wasn't quite used to it yet.

He had gotten an afternoon's reprieve and decided to spend it with his children, whom he hadn't seen much of lately as usually he left before they were up and came home too late to tuck them in. Astrid was another matter entirely, she was always up when he got home. And Toothless followed him everywhere. He didn't miss them quite as much as he missed his little ones.

Suddenly, he got an idea. "Come on, Irena, I have an idea."

* * *

><p>The salty sea breeze hit Irena's nose strongly as they approached the quiet little beach. The main beach was the shipping part, docks and fish and trading. This was a quiet part that most people forgot about. She had never been back there.<p>

"I used to come back here with my dad when I was about your age when he had some free time. We built lots of sand towers." Hiccup said

nostalgically. He shrugged a smile. "I thought you might like it."

Irena shrugged. She had never played in the sand before. She wasn't allowed to get dirty on Sola. What were you supposed to do?

"Do you want to build a castle or something?"

Irena nodded.

"Can you get the blanket back out for your brother, little one? I don't know how much he's going to like the sand. Sorry."

Irena dug the blanket back out of her bag and put it on the ground, Hiccup deposited Gabe on it and gave him a block again. Toothless curled loosely around the blanket and popped his wing up to serve as a sunshade for the baby. Astrid wouldn't be happy if he got a sunburn. Hiccup patted the dragon in thanks.

"You've never done this before, have you?" Hiccup asked Irena.

"No Daddy, "

"Well, I'll show you." Hiccup grabbed a few old bowls and cups out of Toothless' saddle bag. He had decided to grab them just in case they had ended up on the beach. He sat on the sand and Irena, still a bit weary of the texture of the beach, knelt next to him, tucking her dress under her knees so the sand wouldn't make her itch.

"First of all, you have to fill this with sand." Hiccup explained, filling a cup with sand. "And then you need water." He glanced towards the ocean, which was a good fifty yards away from them.

"I'll get it," Irena said.

"Okay, here." Hiccup handed her the biggest container he had.

"Fill it all the way?"

"All the way, "

Irena ran to the water's edge, timing it so the lapping water wouldn't get her feet too wet, and filling the cup with water before carefully coming back. She handed it to her father before sitting next to him again.

He thanked her and poured a bit of the water in, before pushing the sand down tightly and adding more of both sand and water. "The trick is to not get the sand too wet. It needs to stick, but if it's too wet, it won't stay."

Irena nodded studiously.

"And then, when you're ready and it's ready, you flip it over really quick and pull the cup off it slowly. And then it stays. Most of the time. Do you want to do it?"

Irena shook her head. She didn't want to mess it up.

"How about we do it together?" Hiccup suggested.

Irena smiled a bit and nodded.

"Ready?" he asked, guiding her hands to the cup.

"Yes," she had a bit of a lisp. She had lost a tooth recently and the new one hadn't come in yet.

"Okay. One, two, three, flip."

They flipped it together.

"Good job." Hiccup said to the five year old. "Hit the top of the cup."

Irena smacked it with her hand, confused.

"Now pull it off slowly."

She did just that, and the cylinder of damp sand stayed standing.

She beamed. "I did it!"

"You did. Now you can stack some up and build whatever you want."

"Okay!" Irena said, standing up to get more water.

Hiccup smiled after her.

"Da!" Gabe cried from behind him.

"What's up, buddy?" Hiccup asked, turning around.

Gabe wiggled his arms at him and Hiccup pulled the boy into his lap. "Do you want to play in the sand too?"

Hiccup let the boy touch the sand. Gabe yanked his hand back in surprise, making his father laugh.

"Sand," Hiccup said. "That's sand. It won't hurt you, buddy. I promise." He touched the sand to show the baby it was safe. Gabe smacked at the sand with his hand and then giggled. "See? Sand."

"Sa," Gabe said.

"Sand,"

"San," He wasn't going any further than that.

Hiccup smiled. "Good job, Gabe."

About an hour later, when Irena had a whole sand village going, Gabe was picking the sand in his clumsy grip.

"Daddy, look!" Irena said proudly, pointing to the group of sand buildings she was constructing. She had gotten more and more

comfortable with seeking attention and praise. She went from the mousy, smart little girl who blushed when she was complimented and rarely asked for someone to look at what she'd accomplished to a regular five year old who still flushed when she was praised, but she asked for attention herself.

After Irena had started to use her father's birthday gift to her (the journal, as she called it), Hiccup had asked to see if she'd drawn or written anything that day, and if he might see it. At first, she'd show him shyly. But after he told her how wonderful even the messiest drawings were, she became used to it and now showed him on her own. Astrid too had helped with that, asking for the story behind the drawing or the sentence she had written. Irena had even started going for hugs and cuddles whenever she wanted them and not just when she was scared and excited. The hugs were, of course, returned every time.

This put Hiccup and Astrid at ease. She felt safe and comfortable with them and the situation she was in. Cassia, Irena's real mother, would come for a visit every other or so and stay for a few days, and Irena's real father, Dagur, was locked up in a prison on the farthest island of the Barbaric Archipelago (on both Hiccup's wishes and the new Archipelago law against child abuse).

Irena had taken quickly to being a big sister. She played with Gabe and got diapers out of where they were kept and, the most impressive to most villagers, would wipe spit up off his face with a cloth. Spit up that made the twins gag. She often read him a story out of her big story book from their princess friend.

"Wow," Hiccup was impressed with the patience and persistence and artistic ability of the little blonde, the awe was obvious by his expression. "Irena, that's incredible!"

Irena beamed proudly, still on her knees in the warm sand. There was sand in her hair on on her clothes at this point and she was a little damp, but she hardly minded. "Look, I made dragon stables!" she added, pointing to a little, half circle mound she had made. Toothless perked up a bit at the mention of dragons. He snuffed and stood up before going over to investigate the miniature stables.

"Wow," her town was detailed. Actually, it was looking more like an empire. "That's fantastic."

"If you were really tiny, you could go in there." Irena told Toothless seriously, showing him the stable.

"Maybe a Fireworm will find it and make a house out of it." Hiccup thought aloud. Probably not, but imagination wasn't a crime.

"Maybe!" Irena said excitedly. She remembered something and picked up a bowl again. "I have to make an Academy for my town!" she said as if it was the most urgent matter in the world.

Hiccup chuckled. "Okay,"

Irena went back to work, Toothless sitting by her side.

Gabe picked up a fist full of sand and went to put it in his mouth.

"No, Gabe. We don't eat sand." Hiccup reprimanded lightly, pulling the little boy's hand from his mouth and brushing the sand out of it. Gabe pouted a little. "Yucky,"

"Did the chief of Berk just use the word 'yucky'?" asked an amused voice from behind him.

Hiccup turned his head and grinned. Astrid was standing there, arms crossed, shaking her head with a smile. Stormfly was just behind her, having probably aided in finding her rider's family with her powerful nose.

"Why yes," replied Hiccup. "Yes he did."

Astrid laughed a little before sitting next to him. "You're such a dork."

"Thank you, Milady. How was the lesson today?"

"Average. The Nightmare lit itself on fire again and poor Durga started to cry. But she's okay. And so's the Nightmare."

"Ma-Ma!" Gabe said happily, reaching out to her.

"Gabe," she replied, plucking him out of Hiccup's lap and moving him to hers. He kissed his head and he rested his head against her. "How's everything been with the kids?"

"Fine," Hiccup replied. "I've been playing with this little monster," he poked Gabe's tummy. "And Irena made all that," he motioned to the sand-city. "on her own."

Astrid looked towards the five year old's work. "Wow,"

"I know," Hiccup replied. Irena looked pretty sweet at the moment, on her knees, pushing sand into a bowl with Toothless attentively watching her from the side and the calm ocean and clear sky as her back drop.

"She's an incredible kid," Astrid said. She knew that Irena would grow up and do great things for Berk. And maybe even the world.

"She is," Hiccup agreed. He looked back at his son, who smiled his gummy baby smile at him. "They both are."

"I think we're doing pretty good, Haddock." Astrid said after a beat of silence and a glance at both of her children.

"Yeah, I think we are."

Astrid rested her head on his shoulder and he pulled her closer and kissed the top of her head.

* * *

><p>After dinner and baths and hair combing and after Irena had showed off the day's drawings and writing, the family of four humans,

three dragons, and one little cat was ready for bed.<p>

"Can you tell us a story?" Irena asked Hiccup. She was curled against Astrid. Gabe was sprawled out on his stomach on Hiccup's chest, half-asleep. Stormfly was tucked away in her stable, Toothless was curled up on his rock bed, watching the humans with his feline eyes, Safira and Patches curled up on a self together, forever best friends.

"Of course." Hiccup replied. "What do you want to hear about?"

Irena shrugged.

"Tell her the story about your Troll-hunt mishap. When you were, like, seven. She'll like that." Astrid suggested.

Hiccup huffed. "No, you'll like it because I sound like a fool."

"Exactly," Astrid replied playfully, smiling.

So, Hiccup told a story from his childhood. Astrid and Irena laughed at all the funny parts, Toothless sniggered in his dragon way, Gabe babbled mindlessly.

Before long, the story was over and the family was asleep, cozy and together.

There weren't a lot of people that had gotten as lucky as they were. Not a lot a lot of people were as happy as they were either. Sure, their family was a little unusual, but they were happy.

It was amazing how they had become one family in such a short amount of time in the way they had. And it had extended from princesses to fellow Vikings and ex-dragon trappers and even talking snowmen (a certain ex-dragon trapper was currently flirting with a certain ex-kidnappee via letter and everyone figured that something was going to happen soon, and the family would be farther expanded).

If there was one thing all those involved could agree on, it was that no one would change a thing about their mismatched family, not even if they could.

It was certainly more than anyone could ever ask for.

They couldn't be happier.

* * *

><p>AN: Well, everyone this is the end. It comes at an awesome time too. I just hit 300 tumblr followers! Needless to say, I am a tad emotional. **_

**The amount of reviews and follows and favorites this story has received over the last six months (yes, it's been that long!) is incredible and it continues to boggle my mind. I can't thank you all enough for reading this story! it blossomed out of a random thought and look how far it's come. You all are incredible. **

_**Like I said last chapter, there will be a sequel! It'll be called

"Puzzle Pieces" and it'll be up in a week or so. It skips about 10 years into the future. Irena will be about 15. And yes, she will have more siblings. (Three, to be exact!) Until then, I will be taking drabble requests on my Tumblr (how2trainyourfangirl). I can't wait for you guys to see what I have in store for Irena and the family. :)**_

**I would like to tell you in advance that in the next story Eret and Kristianna will be married and Kristianna will live on Berk. I'm really happy about that.**

**I still can't get over all of the love you guys have shown me. This story (and Irena) has been my baby since June. Thanks so much for reading it. I love you all. It is my longest story to date and the only one completed. **

**Now, this story is listed as complete. I can't believe it. **

**Thanks again, all of you. I can't tell you how much it is appreciated.**

**Have a fantastic New Year and I'll see you soon.**

**~Pink**

End
file.